

5: Nichols

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

●178

[For additional information on linguistic
change, see Category 197.]

7: Jackson

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

● 178

[For additional information on linguistic
change, see Category 197.]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

FOREWORD

121 among the Georgia Coastal Negroes are not peculiar to
171 them. Indeed, many of these traits, such as the belief in
ghosts, witches, and conjure, are either known or practiced
by thousands of white and Negro people in other parts of
the United States; while the dogmas and methods of Father
Divine and Bishop Grace seem to flourish best among the
proletariat of Harlem, Chicago, Detroit, Washington, Rich-
mond, and other urban centers. Nevertheless, one finds
121 much in these pages which is new, and one senses the great
virility of old heritages in the daily lives of the coastal
Negroes.

Drums and Shadows makes no pretense of offering a com-
plete picture of the life and culture of these people, but
limits its scope of inquiry to certain definite types. In
undertaking the work, Miss Granger, the supervisor, also
wisely refrained from attempting to include an investigation
of subjects like folk music and dialect, which require special
training and technical analysis. The visits, interviews, and
observations were made by the workers on the Georgia
Writers' Project. The investigators were enthusiastic and
persistent, and, in spite of the fact that they had had no
formal training in ethnological methods, they have made a
real contribution to knowledge. They have recorded what
is probably the most thorough search for African heritages
among Negroes in a small area that has ever been attempted
in this country up to the present time.

121 This question of the nature and importance of African
114 heritage in America bids fair to develop into something of a
177 controversy. At one extreme are scholars like Robert E.
• 178 Park and E. B. Reuter who would not even consider the
matter debatable since they virtually deny the existence of
any significant Africanisms in the United States. Toward
the other extreme is Melville J. Herskovits, who believes that
African heritages are very significant, that they have con-
tributed much to the culture of white America, and that the

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

FOREWORD

121 study of these heritages may point the way to racial under-
114 standing and the alleviation of friction between the races in
177 the United States. My own position lies somewhere between
• 178 these two, since I believe that there are a few important
African survivals in the United States, but that the degree
of significance of these African heritages is questionable in
view of the overwhelming tendency of the culture of the
white man to displace the Negro's African culture, and that
their influence on the everyday problem of race relations is
relatively inconsequential.

121 However, regardless of differences of opinion as to the
nature and importance of African heritages in our civilization,
almost everyone would agree that the question is interesting
and worthy of study. Such study may not only satisfy a
wholesome curiosity but may throw light on the scientific
problem of the processes which go on when two different
cultures come into contact. In dealing with the material
[128] collected for this book, Miss Granger makes no decision
as to the African sources of particular traits. She has,
however, included a valuable appendix on West African
culture patterns and has cited therein numerous possible
parallels between these patterns and the culture of Georgia
coastal Negroes.

Drums and Shadows will interest the scholar as well as the
general reader, for it has combed over a strategic area, has
discovered clues, has raised problems, and thus made easier
the way of any cultural anthropologist who might want to
follow and attempt a definitive scientific study of the
question of African heritages and influences in American
civilization.

GUY B. JOHNSON
University of North Carolina
1940

III

[p. xxxvi is blank]

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

INTRODUCTION

175 Although in 1798 the Georgia Constitution prohibited slave importation directly from Africa and in 1808 the Federal Constitution made the African slave trade unlawful, the favorable topography of the Georgia coast encouraged smuggling. The tidewater coastline and large navigable rivers penetrating for miles into the interior facilitated the landing of cargo. Consequently illegal slave traffic flourished in this region until 1858, when the slave ship *Wanderer* landed its cargo on Georgia soil.

Newspaper advertisements indicate that a large proportion of these early cargoes came from the Gambia River and Niger River sections; later the coast from the Congo River to the southern end of Portuguese West Africa was the base of operation. Accounts of various explorers' travels through Africa at that time, however, indicate that native traders frequently collected their slave cargoes from interior sections and shipped them from the west coast of Africa. Although to the white man, Negroes of an average cargo might have seemed similar in type, it is possible that in many instances they were brought from widely separated regions.

101 The coastal Negroes of Georgia are sometimes called Gullahs, although in general parlance the term is applied only to the Negroes of coastal South Carolina. Because of the similarity in type and speech, however, it is sometimes loosely extended to include the Georgia coastal Negroes as well. The place name, Geechee, derived from Ogeechee River, near Savannah, is also used locally to designate the Negroes of this district.

175 The coastal plantations that absorbed the slave traffic were remote from one another. The jungle swamps of the low country and the wide expanses of water separating the coastal islands made communication difficult among the plantation laborers of this section. With the continued arrival of Africans to these isolated plantation communities, native ceremonies and customs were renewed or exchanged.

• (178)

INTRODUCTION

175
178
(177)
121 This continuous exchange and renewal of folk customs intensified the folk urge fostered by isolation. This naturally delayed the intrusion of white culture and the Negro kept intact much of his racial heritage. For these reasons the student of Negro folklore turns to coastal Georgia for source material. Here he may still find living Negroes who remember parents or grandparents born in Africa.

Much research has been done and many books written on the folk customs and beliefs of the Negro. In this section, however, where the Negro has been kept more or less racially distinct the field is so rich that intensified study in special areas still reveals valuable information.

In an effort to present an accurate pictorial account of this type of Georgia coastal Negro these field reports have been compiled. They endeavor to present the customs and beliefs of what is left of a generation closely linked to its native African origin. Some of this generation of Negroes were slaves; many of them are the children of former slaves and the grandchildren of native Africans. Their customs and tales are their own special heritage. Knowledge of them must be recorded now while this generation lives or they will lose much of their accuracy and value.

121
128 No attempt has been made to give a cross section of the Negro scene as a whole, but only that part of it which would seem to indicate the survival elements. This limitation of the field necessarily concentrates this study on the more primitive aspects of a comparatively small group of persons and ignores a large section of the Negro population whose interest and point of view are vastly different. Effort has been made to base the studies on source material provided by the Negro himself. Footnotes which give African parallels have been used. Though an African parallel does not confine the custom or belief to Africa alone, it provides interesting comparative material for the reader.

121 Visiting the communities was an interesting experience.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

INTRODUCTION

121 Repeated visits were necessary to complete the studies. For
(124) the sake of simplicity and clarity, however, each report is
presented as the result of one visit of continuous interviews.
Though this necessitated telescoping the time element, it in
no way affects the material contributed by the persons inter-
viewed.

• 178 Today sorcery is still practiced. Modern root doctors,
754 visited frequently by their superstitious clients, perform
(759) mystic rites and promise to work miracles and cures. Many
(777) coastal Negroes view adversity not as the workings of fate
but as the revenge of a personal enemy brought about by the
mystic working of the conjure doctor. To this type of
Negro there is little talk of "bad luck." To him it is "bad
mouth" set against him by an enemy.

771 It is understandable that the older coastal Negro's use of
ceremony and even the ordinary routine of his daily life are
influenced profoundly by his beliefs. His imagination con-
tinues to crowd his world with spirits, both good and evil.
Spirits of the departed are still believed to make frequent
visitations to the earth and are as real to this type of Negro
as his next door neighbor. Into his Christian ceremonies
these superstitions and customs have been injected, lending a
distinctiveness not found in many of the white man's cere-
monies.

178 As the field of opportunity widens for the Negro and as
121 his culture begins to approximate that of his white neighbor,
it is among this fast vanishing type that the remnants of folk
memories still live, without which this collection of source
material could not have been compiled.

MARY GRANGER, *District Supervisor*
Georgia Writers' Project

Savannah, Georgia
November 4, 1940.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Y A M A C R A W

789
[115] mention this story to Carrie Hamilton,* whom we next visited.

"I hab heah uh dem people," said this seventy year old woman, who has the tall, heavy frame of a plantation hoe hand. "Muh mudduh use tuh tell me bout em wen we set in duh city mahkët sellin vegetubbles an fruit. She say dat deah wuz a man an he wife an dey git fooled abode a slabe ship. Fus ting dey know dey wuz sole tuh a plantuh on St. Helena. So one day wen all duh slaves wuz tuhgedduh, dis man an he wife say, 'We gwine back home, goodie bye, goodie bye,' an jis like a bud dey flew out uh sight."⁹⁹

(845)
775 "Muh mudduh use tuh tell me all kine uh ting cuz I wuz bawn wid a caul⁴ an wuz diffrent frum duh res. Ebry now an den I see ghos. Dey hab all kine uh shape, sometime no head, sometime no feet, jis floatin by."^{99a} Dey is duh spirits uh duh dead, but ef yuh dohn meddle in deah business, dey ain gwine meddle in yozé."

• 178 Not only among these older Yamacraw Negroes but among younger residents we found a solid background of ancestral beliefs and practices, for here little of modern progress has touched the dirt streets, pebbly walks, and tumble down houses of another day.

754
(593)
[115] Ellen Dorsey,** forty years old, born in Savannah, gave us a detailed description of the conjure her husband put on her.

"Me an him couldn git long so I lef im. He went tuh a root doctuh⁴⁸ fuh him tuh make me come back home. Den duh root doctuh put me down sick so duh wite people I wuz wukin fuh would dischahge me. I had pains runnin up an down muh whole body, an I knowed I wuz cunjuhéd but uh wouldn gib in.¹⁵ I call me in a man who use tuh try tuh sell me a han tuh wawd off cunjuh.^{12a, c, d} He rub muh legs down twice a day, an one mawnin a big black snake run outuh muh big toe.⁵⁰ 'Deah goes duh devil,' say duh root man, an frum

* Carrie Hamilton, 530 West President Street.

** Ellen Dorsey, 516 West Congress Street.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SPRINGFIELD

754 ride im." Dis went on till he staht pinin away. He git disagreeable roun duh home an denne went away. He ain nebul come back. I tink somebody git uh tuh fix im.¹⁵ Dat sho convince me uh duh powuh uh cunjuh."

775 The spirits of the dead are believed to return and visit their former neighbors, sometimes as frequently as in life.¹⁶ Their presence is not always regarded with dread but is often looked upon as a natural incident. One woman made the following statement: "I know deah's ghos, fuh I kin see um. Ef any uh muh friens die, I kin see um mos any-time. Dey peah jis as natchul as wen dey wuz libe."

771
• 178 On the fringe of the community was a small store at which we stopped for a few minutes. The proprietress, a robust, good-natured Negro woman of middle age, talked with us amiably and verified the numerous reports regarding superstitions that her neighbors had already confided in us. In parting we inquired if she thought the people's faith in the supernatural was weakening. The woman regarded us with a wide smile. Shaking her head she declared emphatically, "No, ma'am, dey sho ain losin no faith in magic an sech tings. All deah libes dey heah bout um frum duh ole folks. Seem lak tuh me dey beliebin in um mo an mo all duh time."

PIN POINT

181
142
165
178
(177)
skinned, proud, upstanding and loyal, suspicious of strangers but generous and trusting to friends (Plate VIII, IX, X). Most of the very old inhabitants have died in the past decade, so that to have reached the age of sixty places a man or woman in the patriarchal class. The grown people between twenty-five and thirty, are still close to the traditions and beliefs in which they have been reared. Firmly believing in the Bible, they still are aware of other beliefs and customs handed down by their parents and grandparents.

754
761
(115)
A pleasant, intelligent woman * of about forty-five chatted with us. "Cose, det is duh will ub God, but dey do say jis duh same wen a pusson die, 'Maybe somebody fix em'¹⁵ aw 'I sho know dat uhmun wuz rooted.' I ain nebuch bought no powduh muhsef but jis day befo yestuhdy a uhmun frum Tatenville wuz right yuh tuh dis house sellin High John duh Conqueruh fuh fifty cent an she sho say it would bring yuh powuhful good luck, but I ain hab fifty cent.⁸

754
789
(118)
"Cose, it ain good tuh fool much wid dem tings, but yuh sho hab tuh be keahful not tuh let no enemy git hole uh yuh haiah combins cuz dey say dey sho could fix yuh den."¹⁰ She laughed a little uneasily. "Ef yuh dream ub a snake dassa enemy neahby too, but ef yuh weah a snake skin roun yuh wais, it good fuh wut ail yuh.⁵⁰⁴ An ef uh enemy come tuh yuh house an yuh dohn wahn im deah no mo, yuh jis take duh bruhm an sweep out quick attuh im. Den sprinkle a lill salt on duh flo weah his foot track bin an sweep em all out duh doe an he sho wohn come back no mo."

123
(262)
At this point in her narrative a swarm of barefoot children, black and with shining eyes, clustered around us. One and all were eating crabs, biting into the soft part of the body shell or cracking a claw with strong white teeth. Word had evidently just gone out that some excitement was brewing. Strangers had come and were talking to "Miz Minnie." If anything was going on they didn't want to miss it.

* Minnie Dawson, Pin Point.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

SUNBURY

754 powuhful spell.* Duh man fell sick an had tuh go tuh a root doctuh "fo he git cuod."

777 "Yuh sho hab bad luck ef yuh do a lot uh tings," warned one of the women. "Nobody ebuh carry a hoe aw a rake tru duh house. Das a bad sign."

"It's bad luck tuh carry wood on yuh shoulduh tru duh house," was added to this information.

777
789 "But it ain bad luck ef you weahs a Lucky Haht," interposed Emma.

"And what is a Lucky Heart," we inquired.

"It's fuh good luck. All duh people roun yuh carries Lucky Hahts and Lucky Mojoes an sech tings."*

527
535
1789 Respecting harvest festivals one of the women said, "I hab heah tell how dey dohn do dat no mo."²⁸

"We do git tuhgedduh an hab dance an pahaties an big suppuhs," stated another. Her eyes sparkled at the pleasant memory. "We does duh Snake Hip an duh Buzzud Lope."

The others chorused, "An addalas dance we did duh Fish Tail an duh Fish Bone an duh Camel Walk."²⁷

535 All efforts failed to persuade the women to describe these dances. Evidently thinking of the antics of their neighbors at the recent dance they laughed repeatedly, shaking their heads and nudging one another but refusing to be cajoled into a demonstration.

115 After learning that we wished to record the old customs as far back as possible, the women suggested that we visit Uncle Jonah,* who was the great grandfather of Elizabeth. In answer to repeated halloos the old man came trudging down the road. As he drew nearer the car, we could see that he was a spry, erect little figure, clad in a blue chambray shirt and a pair of dark trousers. Although he carried a gnarled stick for support, he appeared to move with considerable rapidity. His salutation was, "Dis is Uncle Jonah, duh man wut swallow duh whale."

*"Uncle Jonah," Sunbury.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

D A R I E N

115
567 longs tuh Huger Barrett an Ise one uh duh bes sel hans on
Picayune Plantation."

764 We interrupted the old woman's reminiscences about
plantation days to question her about funeral customs.

(567) "We didn't alluz hab too much time fuh big feynul in dem
days cuz deah wuz wuk tuh be done an ef yuh ain do yuh
wuk, yuh git whipped. Lots uh time dey jis dig a hole in duh
groun an put duh body in it, but wenebuh we kin, we hab a
settin-up."

We asked Auntie Jane if they used to provide plenty of
food for the mourners.

• (178) "Yes'm, dey sho did hab regluh feastes in dem days, but
tuhday, at mos settin-ups, yuh dohn git nuttin but coffee an
bread.^{37b} Den dey would cook a regluh meal an dey would
kill a chicken in front uh duh doe, wring he neck an cook um
fuh duh feasts.^{35c} Den wen we all finish, we take wut victuals
(782) lef an put it in a dish by duh chimley an das fuh duh sperrit
(775) tuh hab a las good meal.⁵⁸ We cubbuh up duh dish an
deah's many a time Ise heah dat sperrit lif um. We ain
preach duh suhmon wen we bury um but we waits a wile so's
all duh relations kin come."

(777) "Is it bad luck to steal from a grave?" we wanted to know.

(782) "Bad luck?" repeated Auntie Jane. "Sho it bad luck.

(775) Dem dishes an bottles wut put on duh grave is fuh duh sperrit
an it ain fuh nobody tuh tech um.⁶⁴ Das fuh duh sperrit
tuh feel at home.⁴⁷ Wen he die fah off, we bring um home
tuh bury um, dohn leh no strainjuh be bury wid um. Yuh
gib people wut ain belong tuh yuh anudduh piece uh groun
tuh be bury in.³ We alluz hab two feynul fuh duh pusson.

(769) We hab duh regluh feynul wen yuh die. Den once a yeah we
hab one big preachin fuh ebrybody wut die dat yeah."⁴³

754 Auntie Jane looked up slyly when we asked her if she be-
lieved in conjure.

"I ain believ in um muhsef but deah's plenty wut do. Ise
had Ellen Hammond libin wid me. She die las yeah. She sho

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 Georgia

S A P E L O I S L A N D

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of
 491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through
 461 the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are descendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing, and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company offices.

• 178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart (493) (Plate XVI) jogging along a tree shaded road is a familiar sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius (412) we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in common usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic (124) picture of survival elements that have persisted since the days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new country.

115 One of the oldest inhabitants is Katie Brown (Plate XV), whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive (123) conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long
 534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.
 527 Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times.²³ Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum, rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin plates.^{23, 25} Dey shout an moob roun in succele an look l&k mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

* Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

DRUMS AND SHADOWS

000 grape arbor and spreading live oaks. On the side road stood
137 three stately pine trees from which hung silvery festoons of
115 Spanish moss. Catherine was black, small, and lively at
sixty-nine.

"Ise bawn in Meridian," she said, "but Ise lib mos muh life
heah. Muh people belong tuh duh Atwoods uh Darien an
tings heah on duh ilun is pretty much duh way dey wuz deah.

• 178 Some tings is changed wut hadduh change, lak wen we hab a
764 fewnul duh unduhtakuh come an git duh body an dey dohn
lak yuh tuh hab no settin-up. In duh ole days we would sing
an make prayuh all night an dey would come an measure duh
body wid a string tuh make duh coffin tuh bury em in. Dey
use tuh alluz sen yuh home tuh bury¹ ef dey could git duh
money but dey ain eben alluz do dat no mo. Dey nebuh use
[609] tuh bury no strainjuhs in duh buryin² groun but heah dat
ain kep strick needuh."

527 We asked about the dances and festivals of her youth.

"We use tuh hab big times duh fus hahves,³⁸ an duh fus
ting wut growed we take tuh duh chuch so as ebrybody could
hab a piece ub it. We pray obuh it an shout. Wen we hab
[535] a dance, we use tuh shout in a ring. We ain hab wut yuh call
a propuh dance tuhday.

535 "One uh duh dances wuz call duh Buzzud Lope.¹⁷ It's a
long time sence we done it, but I still membuh it. We ain hab
much music in doze days but dey use a drum tuh call duh
people tuhgedduh wen dey gonuh hab games aw meetin.²⁶ It
sho bin a long time sence I tought bout dem days."

115 Catherine told us that Ryna Johnson, who lived about a
mile down the Harrington Road, was one of the oldest people
491 on the island. Leaving the main highway, we followed the
137 narrow, less traversed side road. It was a heavily wooded
section. We viewed the massive-trunked hoary oak trees
through a misty curtain of hanging moss. The fences along
the road were covered with honeysuckle and wild grape.
Shortly before we arrived at our destination, the road divided

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

ST. SIMONS ISLAND

115
(351) the house. Across the road to the left was a field which had been planted in corn.

Charles, a medium-sized, intelligent man, very black of skin and rather small-featured, talked to us about his people.

(165) "Dey is long libin people," he began. "Muh fathuh lib until he a hundud an muh mothuh wuz ninety wen she die. Muh gran, she name Louise an come from Bahama Ilun.* She lib tuh hundud an fifteen. Das duh way dey do an I guess I'll do duh same."

• 178 Did the people around Harrington believe in the old customs the way his mother and grandmother had believed in them?

(764) "Yes'm, dey sticks tuh em but duh times is changin an yuh hab tuh change wid em. Duh unduhtakuh come now an mone lakly he bring yuh back tuh duh chuch an dey ain no watch an singin."

795 In the course of our talk he told us that the river baptisms were held by members of the local churches. "Yes'm, we still baptize in duh ribbuh," Charles said. "We hab one not long ago. We hab tuh wait till a Sunday wen a ebb tide (783) come at a good time, cuz it duh ebb tide wut carry yuh sin away."³³

754 Charles confirmed what the other residents had told us regarding conjure.

(753) "Well, dey's some belieb in cunjuh an some wut dohn. Dey's lots wut say sickness ain natchul an somebody put bumpt down fuh yuh.¹⁵ I ain belieb in it much muhsef but dey's curious tings happen. Now, wen I wuz a boy deah's 829 a root makuh wut lib yuh name Alexanduh. He wuz African an he say he kin do any kine uh cunjuh wut kin be done an he kin cuo any kine uh disease.⁴⁰ He wuz a small man,

789 slim an bery black. Alexanduh say he could fly.^{40a, 40b} He

(567) ** A number of slaves accompanied their masters from the West Indies to this country. It was also the custom for slave ships to stop at the Bahamas en route to America with a cargo.*

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

ST. MARYS

527 all gives praise fuh the good crop an then we shouts an sings
[535] all night.³³ An wen the sun rise, we stahts tuh dance. It ain
so long since they stop that back in the woods but these
young people they does new kins uh dances."

(535) Horace interjected here, "I seen em do those dances back
in the woods but not yuh."

We asked what sort of music they had for the dances.

535 "They mosly have guitah now," said Hettie, "an we use
534 tuh use guitah too, but we makes em frum goad an we beats
drums too. We makes em frum coon hide stretched ovuh

567 hoops.³⁵ Muh step-fathuh, Andrew King, who lived down
the Satilla Rivuh, use tuh tell me how it wuz in the ole days.
He tell me they bring a boatload of them Africans ovuh
frum a ilun tuh theah plantation. That wuz jis befo the
waw an they wuz runnin frum the Yankees."

262 We asked if she had known any families who refused to
eat certain kinds of food.

"Thas a hahd un, ma'am. Mos people eat wut they kin
git but I knowd Chahlotte Froman who wouldn tech chicken.
(231) They all say that chicken wuz a duhty animal an they ain
(825) gonuh eat em.³⁶ They keeps chicken cuz frizzle chicken is
a wise chicken. It sho kin fine wut you caahn fine."³⁸

We asked about conjure.

754 Horace laughed and said, "I tell yuh, ma'am, they's mo
• 178 doin of cunjuh up roun Savannah than theah is in these
pahts. I jis bin up theah an I ain nevuh heahd so much
talk of it in muh life. Theah's a lot of ole customs still roun
an we've all heahd bout em an knows bout em but theah ain
nobody much wut's ole nuff tuh pay much tention tuh em."
Horace smiled with the superiority of the younger genera-
tion.

115 Later we visited Henry Williams,* (Plate XIX), whose
342 little house (Plate XX) sat back in a clump of tall, over-
grown brush that grew close to the dilapidated paling fence.

* Henry Williams, St. Marys.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Foreword xi

175 Sherman's famous Special Field Order No. 15 set aside for the former
581 slaves "the islands from Charleston south [and] the abandoned rice
175 fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea." Within
423 weeks black homesteaders were happily farming their own plots on
Edisto, Wadmalaw, Johns, and James islands. By September, President
Andrew Johnson had nullified Sherman's order. Many freedmen were
dispossessed, but others tenaciously held on to their lands and passed
them on to their descendants. Some even managed to buy more land at
the end of the nineteenth century as whites again abandoned the islands
after years of feeble cotton prices and a series of killer hurricanes. For
the first half of the twentieth century blacks continued to be in the
majority on the Sea Islands, and land values continued to be low.

361 For generations the Sea Islanders lived under the same hot sun,
182 surrounded by the same sea and salt marsh, forming a barrier that
433 isolated them from the mainland. For generations fishermen flung their
nets into creeks and marshes and ocean for crabs, shrimp, and fish; and
they gathered oysters and clams. These supplied both local markets
and their own kitchens. For generations islanders cultivated their own
little plots of land. Farmers hoed the loamy soil of the islands to pro-
duce crops of beans, peas, and cotton. First there was the planting,
then the weeding, then the reaping. In the winter women sewed clothes
and made quilts; the men looked for work ashore. In the spring they
started the cycle over from the beginning—the planting, the weeding,
the reaping.

The years passed: the young grew old and the old died. And the
planting, seeding, and reaping, and the fishing, shrimping, and crab-
bing went on. And each spring the cycle started over again. Each year
was like the year before. Each generation was like the generation be-
fore. For generations there were the same prayers and the same hopes,
the same faith and the same fear, the same work and the same result.

(561) For generations there was the same old, hard legacy of slavery that
robbed men and women of their honor, a legacy visited upon the
children and the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren, a legacy
against which honest hard work seemed useless, a legacy so old it took
its place among natural phenomena like the wind and the rain.

182 It was not an easy life; but it was a self-sufficient life adapted to the
environment, a life shaped by a rich folk culture. Cut off from the
mainland, generations of Sea Islanders preserved their cultural heritage,
• (178) reflecting both continuity with Africa and creativity in the New World.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

xii Foreword

• 178
(197) Perhaps most important, Gullah—the creole language developed by the slaves on the Sea Islands and in the South Carolina and Georgia low-country—continued to be the language in which their folk culture was passed down to posterity. Proverbs, metaphors of social experience, continued to reflect the African preference for speaking by indirection; and African naming patterns persisted on the Sea Islands. For generations, folktales of the audacious animal trickster Ber Rabbit and of the no less audacious slave trickster John blended elements of African folk narrative with elements of the Sea Islanders' historical experience. For generations talented Sea Island artisans created traditional arts and crafts such as coiled sweetgrass baskets and strip quilts. Out of this tradition one Sea Islander, Philip Simmons of Daniel Island, became Charleston's preeminent artist in wrought-iron gates. For generations folk medicine of both the pharmaceutical and the psychological varieties continued to heal the sick on the Sea Islands, and natural phenomena continued to serve as signs foretelling the future, whether changing weather or impending death. Ghosts or haunts—the spirits of the dead—returned from time to time to trouble the living, although local conjurers (assisted by various substances held to be magical) helped to ward off their unwelcome visits. For generations Sea Islanders entertained their children with play songs after the day's work was done. At night they sang the children to sleep with lullabies. On Saturday nights they held dances and frolics. Their folk version of Christianity retained the earliest "shouting" styles of singing spirituals, in which the African religious phenomenon of spirit possession remained vividly linked with prayer, music, and bodily movement. No one thought this way of life would change. The life of the land and the people seemed fixed in an invisible circle, enclosed by the waters and the passage of time.

177 And then something happened. It did not seem revolutionary at the time. In 1950 Georgia timber magnate General Joseph B. Fraser and his associates bought large tracts of land on the southern end of Hilton Head Island. At first they simply cut down the ancient stands of timber. But soon his son Charles, a young Yale law school graduate, launched the development of a series of lavish resort "plantations"—Sea Pines, Hilton Head, and Honey Horn—pioneering the "resort island" concept. In 1956 the first bridge to Hilton Head Island was constructed. Feverish land speculation ensued as other developers scurried onto Hilton Head and other Sea Islands to exploit the boom, buying up land from black islanders and building more resorts.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

xvi Foreword

177
178
(458) There is a story that during the 1930s an aged black man on one of the Sea Islands was asked how he was faring in the Great Depression. "Dat Depression new-come," he replied. "Ah bin-hyuh. *New-come* can't beat *bin-hyuh*." The Sea Islands survived the Great Depression, but now they suffer from what the historian Eric Hobsbawm calls "the impact of social transformation." The old coexists uneasily with the new, *bin-hyuh* with *come-hyuh*; but *bin-hyuh* is on the defensive. Not even those islands that have thus far eluded the bulldozers have immunity to development. To endure, a community must be able to bequeath its shared traditional expressive culture to the next generation. Without the living context in which that expressive culture arises, cultural endurance is by no means certain. It is not the wildlife of the islands that is the most endangered, says Emory Campbell. "We have become the new endangered species."

121 This book is an act of cultural conservation. Patricia Jones-Jackson knew and loved the people of the Sea Islands and their rich folk culture. Here she vividly presents some of those people and some of that folk culture. In these pages the old talk and the old tales, the old prayers and the old personal expressiveness come vibrantly to life. The talk and tales and prayers and expressions are more than just quaint cultural artifacts. They have provided the islanders with a sense of continuity with generations gone before, a precious lifeline to courageous ancestors who survived slavery and endured generations of poverty. That heritage is a source of strength that has enabled them to cope with the hail and upheaval of life. As we drift further and further out upon the sea of modernization, that heritage may be as crucial to our sanity and survival as to theirs. The Sea Islanders and their folk culture have something precious to offer us if we do not destroy them first.

When Roots Die makes an important contribution to the fields of linguistics and folklore. Both folklorists and linguists can learn much from these interdisciplinary explorations. What makes this a really important book, however, is the fact that it is the first book-length treatment of contemporary Gullah language and culture that combines sound scholarship with a clear and engaging style accessible to non-linguists and nonfolklorists. Readers will find that it can be read for pleasure, but not without profit. It reaches beyond scholars to provide a general audience—teachers, school principals, employers, librarians,

Preface

• 178
(31) The black inhabitants of the Sea Islands, located off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, have provided researchers with a reservoir of distinctively African and African-American cultural roots. Their unique society has been developed, nurtured, and maintained by the geographical isolation of the islands, the social and economic independence of the islanders, and the marginal contact with residents outside the Sea Island area. These factors have created and fostered an environment within which the inhabitants—West African slaves, ex-slaves, and their free ancestors—have been able to reinforce vigorous traditions characteristic of their culture, and to perpetuate communities with concentrations of African influences paralleled by no other black areas in the United States. Remnants of these African traditions were passed on to the islanders through narrative tales, religious practices, burial ceremonies, language patterns, and other practices, only some of which have been recorded by linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, and folklorists.

179 Today changes are being brought to the islands, and the Sea Island culture is declining under the resulting social pressures. On the one hand, outsiders, particularly white Americans, Arabs, and other foreigners, are moving to the area and in some instances commercializing entire islands. On the other hand, the building of bridges has brought about easier access to many of the islands and better educational facilities and job opportunities for their inhabitants. As would be expected, such forces are motivating a break in cultural traditions, an upheaval of social patterns, and a general disruption of the old norms, all of which are now in some danger of becoming lost.

128 This book is structured to provide a comprehensive view of the Sea Island culture and literature and of the Gullah (or, as it is called in Georgia, Geechee) language. Chapter 1 is devoted primarily to a survey of the area and its people. I judge it important to provide a full

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Preface xxi

121 changes of information and ideas among scholars in related fields, are
114 becoming increasingly more apparent.¹

114 Accordingly, during the first two years of my research on the Sea
Islands, I worked with Faith Mitchell, an anthropologist who had spent
several years in the area. Faith's assistance in helping me to understand
the similarities and differences between Sea Island practices and those
of certain peoples of Africa was invaluable. She introduced me to sev-
• (178) eral families in the Wadmalaw community and pointed out such Af-
rican survivals in the culture as iron casting, fishing techniques, and
family practices that she, as an anthropologist, recognized quickly but
I, as a linguist, did not.

The interdisciplinary approach also provided reciprocal rewards
for her. Since "root medicine" always generated lively conversation, I
often used it as a topic for gathering linguistic data. Faith accompanied
me on what she called my "collecting trips," became interested in the
topic, and later wrote a book on the subject called *Hoodoo Medicine*.

127 Any attempt to study a culture without adequate knowledge of its
language, social structure, and history will be abortive, producing dis-
appointing results. To avoid this danger, I decided to familiarize myself
with as much of the literature of the Sea Island area as possible
by preparing a bibliography of readings in linguistics, literature, an-
thropology, folklore, history, and sociology. In assembling a working
bibliography, I included such sources as travel guides, local news-
papers, magazines, dialect dictionaries, government reports, and mis-
cellaneous publications of local societies. Information from sources of
this nature will often, I learned, give detail to geography, climatic con-
ditions, food sources, drug use, towns, cities, ocean and bridge condi-
tions, and the like, in addition to suggesting social contacts.²

121 One usually arrives at a research design or an objective through
intense reading and inquiry into one's target area. Without such the-
oretical preparation, one will have little, if any, idea what problems
need solving. It took an immersion in the historical circumstances that
have produced the language and culture of the Sea Islands to make me
satisfied that I would recognize an Africanism when I heard one. In
any research study, of course, defining and analyzing the research de-
sign before field exploration begins will both expose facts relevant to
solving the problem and determine the methods and approaches which
are likely to be most effective for the study. One has to decide where
the work will be done, the probable time necessary for effective inves-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Demography 9

Demography

175
(103) The Sea Islands were the homes of Indians before the Euro-
peans and Africans came to America, and thus the region is charac-
terized by names like Wadmalaw, Sampit, Santee, Yamassee, Pee Dee,
Winyah, Waccamaw, and Yacamaw. After the forced migration in the
early 1700s of the Yamassee and other Indians, the coastal islands
became the home of African slaves, a few white planters, and ex-slaves
and their free descendants.¹⁰ Not many whites or Europeans inhabited
the islands during the slave trade, and in some places white permanent
175
162 residents are still rare.¹¹ Federal census figures for the coastal areas
567 have until very recently shown high concentrations of African and
African-American populations. For example, 1830 figures revealed an
overwhelmingly black population. The Georgetown district of South
Carolina at that time contained 1,940 whites and 18,000 blacks. A
grand jury presentment held during the fall term of 1835 complained
that the black-to-white ratio in Georgetown was becoming unwieldy
and insisted that something had to be done. Noting that 10 masters of
1,700 slaves were permanently absent from their property, the jury
went on to object that there were only 40 proprietors to oversee a black
population of 15,000 on the Tide Swamp plantation.¹² On many of the
islands the only white persons present were the owners, and in many
cases there was no overseer.¹³

175
567 In 1798 the Georgia Constitution prohibited direct slave importa-
tion from Africa, and the Constitution of the United States made the
slave trade illegal after 1808. Nevertheless, the navigable ocean re-
cesses of the islands and the turbulent rivers leading miles into the
interior facilitated the landing of slaves brought directly from Africa.
Slave trading thus continued to flourish in the coastal region as late as
1858, when the slave ship *Wanderer* brought new slaves to the Georgia
coast. By this time inland parts of the United States were sufficiently
supplied with generations of native-born African-Americans, so the
coastal cities and the Sea Islands absorbed the newly arrived African
population. The continued addition of Africans to communities with
• (178) few, if any, Europeans and an already dense African population made
possible the reinforcement and perpetuation of African traditions in
these areas.¹⁴

175
162 By 1880 the federal census revealed that Charleston County con-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina

12 The Social History and Organization

161 Table 3. Population Projection for Charleston County

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Edisto Island	1,374	1,170	1,120	1,110	1,150	1,190
James Island	24,197	25,944	29,280	33,064	36,890	40,450
Johns Island	7,530	8,853	10,483	12,016	13,469	14,999
McClellanville*	4,094	3,867	3,814	3,905	3,994	4,125
Wadmalaw Island	2,024	1,900	2,150	2,250	2,450	2,650

Source: BCD Council of Governments *Regional Housing Market Analysis*, 1979, p. 21.

*McClellanville is not a Sea Island. It is included here because it is a coastal city that has always had a concentration of African-Americans, most of whom do speak a variety of Gullah.

563 Johns, Kiawah, and Seabrook, have undergone significant population
 161 changes in the recent past (see Table 3).

Economy

433 In the past, the Sea Islanders depended on agriculture and their
 241 natural environment for survival. Without a doubt, the new job oppor-
 • (178) tunities brought to some of the islands by industry and commerce will
 (464) affect this pattern. In fact, current census data indicate that farming is
 464 already being abandoned in exchange for more lucrative livelihoods.
 179 By 1970 only 10 percent of the people on Johns Island and 15 percent
 of those on Wadmalaw were farmers. The figures for farm laborers
 were 13.4 percent on Johns, 20.8 percent on Wadmalaw. The Kiawah
 Island Company painted a glowing picture of the employment oppor-
 tunities that the resort could offer to area residents, estimating that
 "operating employment for the resort would range from 476 to 511 in
 1976, increase yearly to a range of 1,227 to 1,473 by 1980, and climb
 to an incredible 4,034 to 4,458 jobs by 1990." Although the com-
 pany's figures have proved thus far to be somewhat optimistic, the
 resort development has indeed provided jobs for Sea Islanders:

On Kiawah Island, blacks from Johns, Wadmalaw, and other areas
 have recently received both construction and operations jobs, al-
 though the skill levels these jobs involve are either fairly high or
 fairly low. Kiawah estimates, for example, that in August of 1976

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Economy 17

000 side the roads in the early morning. Opossums are baked with large
252 sweet potatoes, and raccoons are delicacies no islander will refuse.
224 The woods are also the home of rabbits, wolves, foxes, squirrels,
skunks, wildcats, and even bears, all hunted, though bears are said to
be rather rare now. The islanders have generally been able to rely on a
variety of wild game. One seventeenth-century explorer compiled a
list:

224 Deer, of which there is such infinite Herds, that the whole Country
136 seems but one continued Park, insomuch that I have often heard
Captain Matthew, an ingenious Gentleman an Agent to Sir Peter
Colleton for his Affairs in Carolina, say that one hunting Indian
had yearly kill'd and brought to his Plantation more than 100,
sometimes 200 head of Deer. Bears there are in great num-
bers. . . . There are Bevors, Otters, Foxes, Raccoons, Possums,
Musquasses, Hare and Coneys, Squirrels of five kinds, the flying
squirrel, whose delicate skin is commended for comforting, if ap-
plied to a cold Stomach, the Red, the Grey, the Fox and Black
Squirrels.³⁴

825 The islanders, old and young, are fully acquainted with the ways of the
local wild animals. Their partial dependency on these animals as a
food source has caused them to pay closer attention to the animals'
personalities and habits than would a hunter from another area. Thus
their categorization of the animals into intelligent and not-so-intel-
ligent ones is based on day-to-day interaction.³⁵

463 In addition to relying on the natural environment,³⁶ many islanders
continue an economic practice which is still the primary method of
consumer exchange in the homelands of their ancestors, selling crafts
and services along with their game and farm produce. Individual island
families are known for "growing" carpenters, tailors, shoemakers,
butchers, cabinetmakers, hairdressers, candlemakers, brickmasons,
builders, farmers, ministers, and herbalists (or "rootmen"). Family
• (178) members tend to follow the traditions set by preceding members of the
family and handed down from generation to generation. The old skills
brought from Africa or learned during slavery, when everything needed
for the plantation was made or serviced by the slaves,³⁷ have lingered in
the protected environment of the Sea Islands. Among the skills highly
valued on the islands are carpentry, masonry, and the like—essential

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

18 The Social History and Organization

463 because the remoteness of the islands means that most of the homes have to be built by the islanders themselves.

285 The Sea Island crafts—jewelry, pottery, fans, baskets—often reflect African styles. Basketry is one of the dominant crafts of the region, and one of the oldest crafts of African origin in the United States. 1978 The baskets were originally made for practical purposes: winnowing rice, carrying clothing, cradling infants, fanning, sorting foods. These were called work baskets and were made of sturdy weaves and such materials as bulrushes and palmetto butts. While the basket weavers still make work baskets, they find that most customers are more interested in their “show baskets,” which are lighter and more colorful but less sturdy and sometimes less expensive to make. The show baskets have various designs, ranging from a tiny candle holder to a gigantic woven bin. Whereas the work baskets are relics of the African utility traditions, the show pieces, including purses, vases, and glasses trays, show European influences and are usually decorative in intent. (531) Within recent years the basket weavers of Mt. Pleasant, a town on the (197) South Carolina coast, have gained fame for their skills with the traditional designs. Their baskets are displayed in educational centers and museums of art throughout the United States and elsewhere, and are purchased by art collectors the world over as survivals of an ancient African craft.

285 Various observers have compared the baskets of the South Carolina 171 coast with their African counterparts. According to one knowledgeable collector, there are strong technical links in weave pattern, design, and final product between the Carolina flat and fanner baskets and those of Nigeria, Togo, Benin, and Ghana.³⁸ The Sea Island coiling technique, the manner of stitching, and the pattern of functional use within an agricultural framework have been likened to the style of Senegal, though coiling, an old and widespread technique, is not by itself sufficient to identify an African source.³⁹ Given that similarities in technique and style may be misleading, the deciding factor in comparisons is the cultural milieu of which the baskets are a part. Because Africans (198) were transplanted from the Gold Coast to America, and because Sea Island African-Americans continue to make baskets that are so like the African counterparts that it is almost impossible to differentiate them, it seems reasonable to accept the fact of a historical link.⁴⁰

285 Children, both boys and girls, are taught basketmaking along with 868 the other traditional skills. Boys and men most often gather mate-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

26 The Social History and Organization

763
456 them to take over the policies, and the children, knowing the importance of proper burial, usually do so gladly.

764
[171]
[175] When an islander has moved away and then died, every possible effort is made to return the body to the island for burial among relatives and friends. The desire to be buried at home is also very common among the Igbo, Yoruba, and other Nigerian peoples, who believe without question that the dead are dependent on their ancestors for spiritual nourishment and thus must be buried among them to find peace.⁵⁰ By ongoing tradition, Sea Island burial places are densely wooded and are considered to be the sacred abodes of the spirits.

764
765
• (178) A burial tradition once practiced widely on the Sea Islands and in rural areas of the deep South, though it is now dying out, is the placing of articles such as pottery, spoons, dishes, and other items belonging to the deceased person on the grave, in case the deceased might need or want them in afterlife. Even those scholars hesitant to ascribe other practices observed on the islands to African influences have readily accepted the African basis of this tradition.⁵¹ I have seen the same practices among the Igbo and Ibibio, and it was at one time not unusual in West Africa for boxes of the dead person's possessions—clothes, hardware, and crockery, for example—to be laid by the body, which was not interred but left on top of the ground and covered with branches and leaves.⁵²

764
[178] On the Sea Islands children's graves were traditionally decorated with favorite toys, broken glasses and cups, and money banks always containing a few pennies. The islanders could not explain why the glasses and cups were broken before they were put on a grave. Some said that it was done to decrease the chance of someone's stealing the items; others commented they were merely copying what they had always seen done. The old customs, however, are now being replaced for both children and adults by the use of fancy headstones and cement vaults, which have come to be thought more prestigious signs of one's love for the deceased person.

Sea Island funerals are often very sad and solemn occasions, but they are also very emotional, as are most of the religious services. People attend a funeral to pay their respects to the deceased, but even more to pay their respects to the deceased's family. Each person is given a funeral as elaborate as the family and friends can make it, and the church is packed as full for the funeral of a young child as it would

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 28]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Social Structure 31

796 starts slowly and softly, gradually increasing in tempo while the shout-
793 ers strive to keep up with it; it becomes louder and faster until they are
786 totally spent.

796 The call-and-response style is still the tradition of worship in Sea
794 Island churches, just as it is in most southern black churches. The
786 minister calls out a statement, and the congregation repeats it or gives a
rhythmic and raucous reply. Though many of the men act as responders
to the ministers, few shout or become "happy" as many of the women
do. However, those who do join in the movements of the shout do so
with considerable zeal. These frenzied shouts are related to the prac-
[71] tices of certain African religious cults.⁵⁵ In 1904 a woman wrote of her
encounters with the spirituals and shouts of the Sea Islands and asked
an inhabitant what explained them. The respondent replied that when
the preacher read from the Bible how those "dry bones ter lib ergin,"
something deep within her would come to life and she would begin to
holler and sing some old "shout" song from Africa.⁵⁶ I observed sim-
[71] ilar call-and-response services in Nigeria: though I could not always
understand what was being said in the language of the service, I found
that I could nevertheless join in singing the reply.

• 178 Today there are many customs and practices unique to the Sea
Islands and to parts of Africa which offer investigators rich insights
into African and African-American traditions. The Sea Island language
and oral literature did not develop and survive apart from the social
and cultural environment which produced them. The extended family
household and the Sea Island burial customs, religious beliefs, and
styles of worship are no less evidence of African roots and preserva-
tions than is the language itself. As long as these roots remain viable,
the Sea Island people will maintain their cultural integrity; only when
such traditional roots die will their culture die. I hope that an aware-
ness of these influences upon the culture will aid in understanding the
African influences upon the language and literature discussed in the
following chapters.

4

The Language

The old-time talk we still de talkem here!

We still speak Gullah here!

History

197 The factors which nurtured the Sea Island culture also nurtured the development and perpetuation of the unusual Sea Island language called Gullah or Geechee. The geographical isolation, the marginal contact with speakers outside the Sea Island communities, and the social and economic independence contributed to creating an environment where a mixed language could thrive. Gullah is defined as a creole, the language that results when a pidgin, which has no native speakers but comes into existence as the product of communication among speakers of different linguistic backgrounds, takes over as the only language of the community.

197
• 198 The Sea Island language, like the culture, is undergoing transformations. Several varieties of contemporary Gullah can be heard in day-to-day conversation on topics ranging from who is running for president to the best bogging place in the creek. With the exception of the unusual accent, some speakers show little deviation from standard English at all. The degree of standard English acquisition is a reflection of such factors as the level of education, the accessibility or inaccessibility of a given island to outside forces, and the extent of inside social mobility. Just as one hears a form of standard English, one also hears the "real Gullah" spoken by children and adults in all aspects of community life.

197 The history of Gullah is complicated. It is called a creole language

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 : Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

History 133

197 because it is believed to have resulted from the merger of English and languages used along the West African coast, including Ewe, Fante, Efik, Ibibio, Igbo, Yoruba, Twi, Kongo, and Mandinka. Since many African slaves were also brought from the Angola region of West Africa, some researchers suggest that Angola is a possible source for the word *Gullah*; *Geechee* may be derived from the *Gidzi*, a language and people in the Kissy country of Liberia.¹

197
198
199 The isolation without a doubt contributed much to the perpetuation of *Gullah* as the language of the Sea Islands, but it can be credited with achieving even more than that. Growing up as a black majority almost free from outside social influences, such as racial prejudice characteristic of the white-dominated society in the inland parts of the United States, undoubtedly affected the attitudes and perceptions of the islanders, to the extent that few of them wish to leave the islands today. Lorenzo Dow Turner found as late as 1949 that some islanders had never been to the mainland.² With improved bridges and roadways, most have easy access to and from the islands; however, several of the elderly informants for this study reported that they had not left their island in at least forty years.

191
829
823 Today, as I have indicated, the islanders are still very private people and will often guard the secrets of their culture just as they make attempts to guard their language. When I asked some Charlestonian informants why they supposed the islanders speak the way they do, they gave this interesting account:

Francis: Why they speak the way they does?

Jean: Why they speak the way they do?

Francis: Oh, I don't know. I think it's [because] they used to use that pump water long ago.³

Jean: No-o-o-o. I don't think it has anything to do with the water.

I mean, the water do taste different from the city water.

But . . .

Francis: I know it's different.

Jean: I really don't think it has anything to do with [the water]. I think it's just, maybe it just the fact that they is isolated more than we are. You know, and . . . ah . . . most people over there just content to be left alone. . . . They don't see many people that . . . ah . . . speak anything different or learn anything different. And they are content with their life, you

TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 135

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina

Present-Day Gullah 137

197 major comprehension barriers to speakers of the standard language. On the other hand, while a creole language also results from social and regional variations, a creole is similar to the primary language mainly in vocabulary; it differs in features of syntax and phonology to the extent that the creole and the primary language may be mutually unintelligible.

197
 197
 • 198 Secondly, despite the common West African ancestry of speakers of black English dialect, Gullah, and other creoles, isolation has tended to protect the Africanisms in the islanders' speech. As noted in Chapter 1, blacks are still in a majority on most of the Sea Islands and still enjoy the effects of both isolation and majority status. The impact of outside forces is not yet intense enough in most places to modify greatly the traditional, socially cohesive customs. And Gullah still thrives as the language of familiarity in the Sea Island communities. Even the few white families that have long made their homes on the islands speak Gullah, and readily admit to speaking it. Most native-born white islanders say they learned Gullah as a first language from their parents, neighbors, and island playmates.

197
 192 The third and perhaps most important distinction between Gullah and black dialect is in vocabulary. True, the lexicon of Gullah, like that of black dialect, is composed primarily of English words. Even so, there are a host of African-derived words in Gullah, some of which are generally unknown to inland black speakers, for example:

gula, "pig": Kongo
goober, "peanut": Kimbundu
gumbo, "okra": Tshiluba
gumbi, "medicinal weed":

Bambara

heh, "yes": Vai
hoodoo, "bad luck": Hausa
yambi, "yam": Vai
chigger, "small flea": Wolof
juk, *juky*, "disorderly": Wolof
cush, "bread," "cake": Hausa
nana, "elderly woman,"
 "grandmother": Twi

nansi, "spider": Twi
tote, "to carry": Kikongo
chicabod, "seesaw": Mandingo
unu, "you": Igbo
yent, "to lie": Umbundu
pinto, *bento*, "coffin": Temne
biddy, "small chicken": Kongo
buckra, "white man": Ibibio
de, "to be": Igbo
eh, "yes": Igbo
ashantie, "house": Ga¹⁰

551 Most of the islanders still have two kinds of given names: one used within the Sea Island community and one used in outside transactions. Mozi, Misy, Maima, Kutsey, Kisi, Lunza, Masa, Yatta, and Chineque

TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 139

Conclusion

539

[di lɔd ẽ bɪnə muβ mi mɔŋtɪn
bət i bɪn gɪβ mi sɪçɹet fə klɔɪɹəm]

*God didn't move my mountain,
but he gave me strength to climb it.*

177

• 178

During my search for Africanisms in the Sea Island culture over the past ten years, I have seen that some of the old traditions are dying out while others remain intact. Each year I see something different, hear more old tales, and learn another old word. It is hard to measure the precise impact of new pressures on the islands. But the islanders are beginning to lose their geographical isolation, and they are thus being forced to alter a culture which has existed and served them well since the first importation of African slaves to the island shores.

177

178

576

Some elements are resistant to change. The extended family is remaining intact because the islanders are still in a majority. Though their communities are being diluted by outsiders, their family norms are less open to invasion. The islands are still sectioned off into family communities where all persons remotely related to the family have the right to live. This housing tradition will be difficult to disrupt, though it may be easier to displace. The pressure of nearby resort areas has encouraged land take-overs at some spots, and taxation and other legal means have been used to force homeowners to leave (see Appendix 4). However, when the islanders are obliged to move, most often they relocate at a place where relatives offer them a piece of land on which to build. Thus the cohesiveness of the family structure continues to prevail.

A, [For Appendix 4, see Category 423, pp. 165-168--Analyst]

[p. 147]

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

148 Conclusion

178 There is continuity, too, in the religious services. Worship is
771 shared with others who appreciate the place of religious exercises in
796 the traditional structure of beliefs and values. The services continue to
(173) be alive, energetic, and thoroughly enjoyable. Sermons and prayers
(793) are still passed on orally from one generation to the next, rather than
of the island area, who speak the language, and who value the old
traditions.

178 Basketry and marketing remain important, for two reasons. They
285 have economic significance, but pride has also become a factor. The
children learning the basket traditions now are being told that the pat-
terns they are weaving repeat not only the patterns woven by their
grandparents but those of their African ancestors before them.

178 Fishing and netting continue to provide livelihoods for many,
222 though they are endangered by development and pollution of the wa-
(821) ters. The islanders are "river and ocean" people. They gauge their
(823) workdays by the sun and by the ebb and flow of the tides. Some con-
(538) tinue to use the marsh mud to fertilize their gardens. Others go to the
(461) banks of the ocean recesses to sit, fish, and tell tales of Ber Rabbit,
(867) tales often so vivid that many of the children swear they have actually
(868) seen him bounding down the island paths. The fishing techniques and
the love and respect for the ocean are being passed on to the children
along with the tales, myths, lies, and legends of island life.

178 The folklore and literature of the Sea Islands, unsurprisingly, are
538 more alive on the remote islands than on the more commercialized
(207) ones. Though television, with its cartoon characters and talking pic-
tures, is an arch rival for even the most gifted teller, on stormy days
and dark, gloomy nights no one is permitted to watch television be-
cause the islanders believe that it draws electricity and increases the
possibility that their homes could be struck by lightning. During these
times the children are gathered and told tales of Ber Rabbit, hants,
ghosts, witches, and hags, and no television program can hold an au-
dience as spellbound as some of the island storytellers.

178 Gullah, the island language, is being affected by population
199 changes, television, and the schools. Children are seldom named after
(551) days of the week any more, but most are still given two names: one to
(192) use at school and one to use at home. Many of the words familiar to the
older generations are not being passed on to the children because the
islanders, like most parents, want their children to attain good educa-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Conclusion 149

• 178
199
199 tions, and a good education does not include the old vocabulary. The children do, however, still learn to speak and understand Gullah: they return home from school and community to extended families where older members are responsible for their discipline and training; the church services are rendered in an elite variety of Gullah; the school-teachers are from the islands and often chastise the children in Gullah; and most of all, the islanders are in a majority a. d Gullah, not standard English or a variety thereof, is the accepted language of the community. In the near future, therefore, some version of Gullah will probably continue to exist as the language of the home and of the community.

181
609 Finally, the islanders remain as conservative about their culture as they ever were. As I have noted, they are hostile to strangers, and word of outsiders carries quickly. No one, black, white, or otherwise, can escape their cultural interrogations. They will want to know who each newcomer is, and why this person has arrived. But it is not true, I learned, that the islanders will remain hostile. Once one establishes oneself within a community (which often takes years to do), one will receive all possible warmth and hospitality and all the help one might need to carry out one's work.

000 In writing this book I promised to tell the story of the islanders as I saw it, and to the best of my ability, that is what I have done.

The end of that one!

[p. 150 is blank]

Appendix 2

Buh Rabbit en' de Lawd

539
197
• (178) What follows is the tale "Ber Rabbit and the Lord" from Chapter 3, reconstructed in the Gullah of a century ago. A comparison of the two versions will show how the language has changed in the interim.

128 I am grateful to Mrs. Virginia Mixon Geraty, who suggested and prepared the transcription, for her time, willingness, and patience.

539

One time Buh Rabbit gone tuh de Lawd fuh git mo' ecknowledge, mo' wisdom. En' de Lawd tell Buh Rabbit, "Awright! Uh wan' you fuh fetch me ennyt'ing wuh w'ite. Ennyt'ing w'ite."

Rabbit gone een de fiel', en' 'e gone en' meet Buh Paa'tridge dey dey, 'e hab uh bag, en' 'e tell Buh Paa'tridge: "Uh betchuh all ub you, all ub you ent able fuh full'up dishyuh bag."

Paa'tridge say, "How you mean?"

Run een de bag en' see kin you full'um up."

De paa'tridge 'pread 'e wing, run een de bag en' full'um up. Buh Rabbit pit'um 'cross 'e shoulduh en' cya'um tuh de Lawd. "Awright!" 'E gone sen'um back. Buh Rabbit sen' Buh Paa'tridge back.

"Well, now, Buh Rabbit, Uh wan' you fuh fetch me—Uh wan' you fuh fetch me—uh rattlesnake!" Dainjus!!! 'E pit Buh Rabbit weh 'e dainjus, fuh true!

Buh Rabbit tell'um, "Awright!"

Buh Rabbit gone een de fiel' en' fin' uh rattlesnake, en' 'e hab uh cane en' 'e tell Buh Rattlesnake: "Buh Snake, oonuh ent—oonuh ent long ez dis cane." Buh Rattlesnake run 'long 'side de cane.

Buh Rabbit say, "No! Uh yent mean fuh do'um so. Uh wan' oonuh fuh run een'um."

Appendix 4

The Land Question

423

• [178]

As the islanders often put it, "Everything change up now." One of the major areas of change in recent years has been in the use and ownership of land in the islands. "Primarily," comments Ed Brown, an attorney practicing in Charleston County who grew up on Wadmalaw,

the land is changing hands because history has created a division between those people who own the land and those people who want to buy land. And if a developer comes in here with forty thousand dollars for ten acres of land, which might appear at first blush to be a lot of money, the landowner is perhaps inclined to take the forty thousand dollars and part with title to the land. That happens. I don't know that that is a bad thing. I think that what it does do is it creates a problem for the person who has sold the land, because if you are not sophisticated in terms of handling the forty thousand dollars, then you lose it rather quickly, whereas the land would be there forever.¹

The relationship of black people to land in general has considerable significance. Various studies and reports trace the origins of many of the current domestic ills of the United States to the surge of southern blacks into urban areas as the rural southern economy found that under existing social arrangements, it could no longer employ large numbers of small farmers, sharecroppers, tenants, and unskilled farm laborers. In the 1960s alone, more than 1.3 million blacks left the South, and during the previous decade the number was even greater.²

423

179

The population that remains behind on the islands is having to adjust to the incoming population of resort residents, as well as resort development for tourism. Developers have not been responsive to local needs. Seabrook was the first of the islands to be opened up as a resort.

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina

172 Notes to Pages 17-26

825
 538 protective coating like Ber Cooter. He cannot fly like Ber Buzzard or remain aloof on a high perch like the owl. His only defense is his wit, and his wit he puts to good use in the tales told about him on the Sea Islands. Knowing his habits well, perhaps the islanders find him more deserving of the titles "trister" and "sporty little animal" than any of the other animals they come in contact with.

82
 (1805) 36. The islanders' interactions with the natural environment go beyond the economic. The children become amateur oceanographers and learn to foretell the weather by the humidity and color of the sun at given times of the day, and the manner in which it sets in the evening. They learn to gauge time within minutes in a furrowed field by counting the number of rows that a shadow covers at certain times of the day, as well as by the distance of the sun as it moves from "day clean"—sunrise—to "out the light"—sunset. "Island time" is important because the inhabitants' fish, crab, and shrimp only when the tide reaches certain levels coming in or going out. Water is a subject of much symbolism among the older islanders. Once one has partaken of the Sea Island water, one is thought to have a right to live on the islands. But as I was informed, in no uncertain terms, the water must be offered by an older, native-born member of high social esteem for that right to be legitimized.

000 37. On this point see, for example, Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 61-63.
 38. Winifred Owens (personal communication).

113 39. Mary Arnold Twining, "An Examination of African Retention in the Folk Culture of the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1977), p. 175.

000 40. Ibid.; Owens (personal communication).

113 41. Greg Day, *South Carolina Low Country Coil Baskets* (Charleston, S.C.: Charleston Communication Center, n.d.).

42. Jackson, Slaughter, and Blake, "The Sea Islands as a Cultural Resource," p. 37.

43. William Demerson (Bamidele Ade Agbasebe), *The Role of Wife in The Black Extended Family: Perspectives from a Rural Community in the Southern United States*, New Research on Women and Sex Roles (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Continuing Education of Women, 1974), p. 135. Demerson is an anthropologist who has spent several years in the Sea Island area.

44. Ibid., p. 130.

45. Ibid., p. 135.

46. For further discussion see Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 141-63, especially p. 144.

47. W. D. Weatherford, *The Negro from Africa to America* (1924; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 44.

48. See John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday and Co., Anchor Books, 1970), p. 209.

49. Quoted in Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Status of Gullah: An Investigation of Convergent Processes" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1978), p. 134. See also Appendix 3 herein.

50. Georgia Writers Project, *Drums and Shadows*, p. 236.

51. Crum, for example, does not acknowledge the influence of African languages

764
 • 198
 191

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina

Notes to Pages 26-47 173

764
 178
 171
 113
 on the speech of the islands, but he does, without qualification, admit the African origin of the traditional burial customs (*Gullah*, p. 97).

52. Robert Hamill Nassau, *Fetichism in West Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), p. 218.

53. Emory Campbell (personal communication), Penn School Center, Frogmore, S.C.

54. Quoted in Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Oral Tradition of Prayer in Gullah," *Journal of Religious Thought* 39, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1982): 22.

55. See Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941).

56. Jennett Robinson Murphy, *Southern Thought for Northern Thinkers* (New York, 1904), p. 23, quoted in Crum, *Gullah*, p. 144.

Chapter 2

1. See Joel Chandler Harris, *Nights with Uncle Remus: Myths and Legends of the Old Plantation* (New York, 1883); Charles C. Jones, *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast Told in the Vernacular* (Boston, Mass., 1888; reprint, Columbia, S.C.: State Co. 1925); Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folklore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: American Folklore Society, 1923); and Ambrose Gonzales, *With Aesop along the Back Border* (Columbia, S.C.: The State Co., 1924).

2. See Charles Joyner, "Slave Folklife on the Waccamaw Neck" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977); or Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, pp. 172-195, especially pp. 190-91.

538
 3. The *he* is for convenience; Sea Island storytellers can be women but are more usually men (see the next section of this chapter).

113
 4. Lee Haring, "A Characteristic African Folktale Pattern," and Phillip Noss, "Description in Gbaya Literary Art," both in *African Folklore*, ed. Richard Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972); and Patricia Jones-Jackson, "The Audience in Gullah and Igbo: A Comparison of Oral Traditions," *College Language Association Journal* 27, no. 2 (December 1983): 197-209.

5. DeCamp, "Toward a Generative Analysis," p. 369.

6. Dell Hymes, *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1974), pp. 43-44.

7. Ray L. Birdwhistell, *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 80-81.

8. Alfred Hayes, "Paralinguistics and Kinesics: Pedagogical Perspectives," in *Approaches to Semiotics*, ed. Thomas Sebeok, Alfred S. Hayes, and Mary C. Boieson (London: Mouton Publishers, 1964), pp. 158-59.

9. Richard Dorson, *Negro Tales from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Calvin, Michigan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 52.

000
 10. "Description in Gbaya Literary Art," p. 74.

11. Finnegan, *Limba Stories*, p. 68.

12. Interview courtesy of WHMM TV and South Carolina ETV, from the documentary film *When Roots Die*, 1985.

3; Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

Prologue

131 The coastal region of the South Carolina Lowcountry, bounded on the north by Georgetown and on the south by Port Royal and St. Helena Sound, was the land of the Gullah slave population. Bordering on these coastal lowlands, stretching out into the arms of the sea, halfway between Charleston, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia are a fringe of fertile islands. The largest of these islands are Port Royal, Paris, Ladies, Hilton Head, and St. Helena.¹ Here indigo and the once famous long staple cotton were cultivated by the most isolated Gullah slaves, who also created and maintained a distinct, imaginative, and original African-American culture. Because their isolation precluded direct exposure to mass Euro-American influences, Sea Island Gullahs offer evidence of significant combinations of traditional retentions, American acculturation, and intergroup socialization.

208
249
567
177
178
101
175
567
The name "Gullah" is generally believed to be a shortened form of Angola. Africans from the Kongo-Angola region, Bantu-speaking peoples, were imported in large numbers during Carolina's early colonial history.² As early as 1742, the *South Carolina Gazette* advertised for a runaway slave called "Golla Harry." One of Denmark Vesey's coconspirators, "Gullah Jack," was reportedly born in Angola. An entry of the Charleston City Council for 1822 refers to "Gullah Jack" and his "Gullah or Angola Negroes." The Vesey trial record, however, simply refers to Jack as an African. Winifred Vass, in *The Bantu Speaking Heritage of the United States*, points out that the ruler of the Mbundu nation in Central Africa was called the Ngola, from which the Portuguese named the colony. Vass suggests that this name was used by Europeans to refer to

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 17]

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

58

THE AFRICAN BACKGROUND

171
791 guiding potential Christian converts through the "seekin'" experience just as Poro and Sande leaders conducted the neophytes through the "bush" experience.²⁵

754
759 A second group of leaders worked on the periphery of Christianity. These "doctors" or "conjurers" were highly regarded by Africans and by African-Americans tied to their past while also creating a present. Some resembled the African specialists, in Kikongo the *nganga*, practitioners of *minkisi*. Yet others practiced *kindoki*, and brought evil. For if *Nzambi* and the ancestors set the limits of human possibility, and gave humans countermeasures against catastrophic forces, this influence was not always successful. The sorcerer *ndoki* brought chaos, disorder, sterilization of nature, and even death. Hence we find among the Gullahs the belief in conjuration and in witches of human form who brought evil via mystical actions, and in root "doctors" and healers who worked for the forces of good.

567
791
175 As Christianity crusaded through the slave quarters during the last generation bondage, another type of major leadership is identified as having a commanding influence upon the Gullahs. These plantation meeting house elders, chosen by whites, were the last group to develop. As spiritual parents, root doctors, and conjurers were a bridge between old and new traditions, with accentuation of the former, the "praise house watchmen" were the embodiment of creative forces that congealed past and present into something exceptional. But the new leadership, unlike the old, was probably more definitely in alignment with the new religion. Still black elders were pillars of strength in the slave quarters, and often above reproach among the members of the socioreligious communities.²⁶

178
791
829 Association with African traditions obviously weakened, first in wake of new circumstances and later due to the power and appeal of the new religion. Yet while many elements of Africanity disappeared, other beliefs and customs took on new forms. Some features basic to traditional experience and thought outlived the capture, homeland enslavement, Middle Passage, and Protestant influence. African religious orientation was fundamental to early ethnic groups brought to the Sea Islands and coastal Lowcountry. Additionally, in the process of community-building, a cosmology significant in traditional African societies formed another basis of the Gullah world view and spirituality. A sacred concept of reality and of the universe not only explained natural and supernatural phenomena for Africans, but fashioned notions about human relation-

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

THE SOCIORELIGIOUS HERITAGE

59

ships as well. The ontological²⁷ category of traditional African societies, and which also formed the basis of the Gullah world view, was the fusion of spirituality with human activity and the impact of a sacred presence in all areas of life. Spirituality was a main element of culture, integrating and coordinating other aspects of communal behavior. Such a pattern, so deterministic to group attitudes in West African society, was difficult to obliterate especially among a people so completely defined out of the new social and cultural structure into which they were thrust.

West African world view was consonant with the idea that in a cohesive and integrated community each member had a place. In colonial Kongo whites tended to assume that individualism was absent from black behavior, and attributed to Africans a "Bantu mentality," completely different from "European mentality." As one author noted, this was a rationalization for despotism over Africans. Wyatt MacGaffey maintains that a "purely dogmatic" assumption of some scholars led to insistence that the individual is not differentiated from the collective or clan. One solution, writes MacGaffey, is to distinguish between "true individualism," a commendable trait among the BaKongo, and "egocentrism" which was deplorable. Additionally, MacGaffey sees a difference between progressive "civilized collectivism" and primitive forms of collectivity, the latter stagnating a society. These insights explain much about traditional African society. Certainly Africans had civil, structured communities in which individual activity was forged with collective necessity. Traditional African spiritualism was an individual as well as collective experience. It encompassed the total well-being of the community, but each person had a role in society, guided by spiritual forces. In this sense, religion for Africans and Gullahs, whether essentially traditional or Christian, was a total immersion phenomenon. The sacred was not set apart from temporal, individual, communal, material, or even political concerns, and religion assumed a meaning outside of a "holy" building, a "sacred" day of the week, or a set of dogmas and creeds to be accepted at face value. In traditional African philosophy, spiritual clan affected one's whole system of being, embracing feelings, social interactions, values, fears, and the disposition of the community at large. John Mbiti succinctly expresses this consciousness:

... in traditional society there are no irreligious people. To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, to do so is to be severed from his

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

175
179
152
178
Gullahs were "easily excited," and claimed that it was necessary "to instruct them in distinguishing between animal feeling and a real work of grace." Methodists frowned upon Gullah paroxysms, not viewing these as manifestations of Christian fervor but as non-Christian or "natural" means of expressive outlet, born of older traditions. In any case, black impetuosity had to be eradicated just as the violins and banjos had to be silenced. Generally speaking, Methodism among the Gullahs can be partly described as E. P. Thompson implicitly viewed it among British workers—a religion of the heart that sometimes attempted to stifle spontaneity of the mind and soul.⁶⁹ Slaves were rarely allowed to be themselves in the presence of Methodist emissaries. This fact, coupled with Gullah preference for a presentation of religion (or a religious presentation) in more original and familiar terms, lost the Methodist church many black converts.

175
179
The Acceptance of Christianity by the Gullahs, as presented by their Methodist instructors, was more of a process of coming to terms than a total commitment. Christianity was incorporated into, but did not immediately supersede, all of their previously held beliefs and practices. The missionaries realized this, reported it with disappointment, and hoped for a better day. Such was the case with the adult generation of Gullahs in the 1830s, and this continued to be a major factor in the 1840s as well.⁷⁰ On the isolated Sea Islands a certain Old World cultural similitude contributed to the retention of communal and cultural components. Traditions inspired by Africanity and infused with Gullah folk Christianity remained identifiable well past the antebellum years. Nevertheless, Africanisms outlasting the capture, the long march, and the culminating humiliation of foreign servitude had to be preserved in a vestigial state. In addition, commingling of various ethnic groups indicates that cultural diffusion was also an important factor as native ceremonies and customs were renewed and exchanged. Therefore, what was retained of African religion and spirituality was culled from the customs, beliefs, and practices of a number of West African peoples. Thus Gullah-English dialect

(198)
175
179
may be a pidgin influenced mainly by Tshi (Gold Coast), KiKongo (Kongo-Angola), and Mande (Upper Guinea) linguistic patterns. But Gullah spiritual and communitarian features bear strong resemblance to traditions of Upper Guinea and BaKongo peoples. When the Methodists arrived among the Gullahs, they probably found a syncretism of African customs and practices sprinkled with snatches of Protestantism borrowed

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

TO MAKE THEM BETTER SLAVES

231

plication" of slaves for "tickets to get baptized," and join the Baptist Church. The slaves derived no Christian benefit from their association with the church, said Field, but used it as "a place of resort." Field "suspected an influence decidedly contrary to vital godliness," but added that it could not be prevented "unless I resided on the place myself."³⁹

If the benne seed ritual is an example,⁴⁰ these societies had some characteristics similar to African associations. It is later argued that the black societies were, like the African societies, units of organization that regulated conduct and served to integrate individuals into the plantation community. Within these societies Gullahs practiced their own version of Christianity, and created their religious folk-culture. Baptist planters apparently intended to alter the "corrupt" elements within these slave associations and use them to promote a Christianity, suitable to their own ends. Slaves' familiarity with concepts of secret society, membership, and social regulations suggest a relationship to African institutions that Christian ideas of a community of believers reinforced. Like the formation of Gullah language, the syncretic evolution of African Christianity was a gradual process. It began when diverse African groups framed a spiritual commonality and belief system into which Christianity, at various times and with varied intensity, was incorporated, reformulated and appropriated. For many years, Gullahs heard of "Christianity" mainly from black rather than white teachers, and this contributed to the persistence of African norms, thought, and ceremony. But, as the benne seed ritual suggests, the presence of black "Christians" in the slave quarters undoubtedly produced debates, challenges, acknowledgments and selective adaptation even before 1830.

While Methodist missionaries were "suspicious" of the black societies, for Baptists they were a medium for religious service and discipline among the slaves. Thus the black societies served one function for slaves and embodied another for slave owners. At Beaufort and other churches, slaves professing conversion as Baptists had to unite with a society. Beaufort Church, with its large black membership and extensive records, illustrates how whites expected these societies to function. At first black leaders had charge of the societies, but subject to the superintendence of a resident planter. The black leaders reported at the monthly church meeting. According to the Minutes of Beaufort Church for November 11, 1840:

173
567
794

173
567
794

173
178
567
794

173
567
794
797

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

260

THE SOCIORELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

793 him for many years insisted that his "wisdom" and "vision" were "God's free gift" for a service of faith and hope that "Prophet" Polite had rendered his people. In old age, as a free man, he addressed the Praise House congregation probably the same way he did on other occasions throughout the years after slavery. The words of Sam Polite demonstrates that the Gullahs, in freedom as in bondage, viewed their religion as a special gift with a unique essence:

793
539
791

God done gib de white folks a heap of things, but he ain't forgotten us 'cause He gib us Religion and we have a right to show it out to all de world. De Buckra [white people], deys got de knowing of the whys and hows of religion, but dey ain't never got de feel of it yet. I think God ain't have much respect for no kind of religion without de feeling. De Book say, 'They that worship me must worship me in spirit and in truth.' There might be some truth in deys-all religion, but there ain't much spirit in a religion that's all in de head.'

791

The Gullahs' capacity to maintain psychological and spiritual autonomy in the face of degrading implications of their historical circumstances was usually attributed to their faith. The ostensible basis of this faith was Christianity. Certainly one source of Gullah religion and spirituality is found in Christian example, enabling them to see their enslavement in heroic terms. Yet Gullah roots sprang from an African world view that emphasized affirmation and celebration of human life, with religion representing the highest expression of that existence. Additionally, their African heritage familiarized Gullahs with the power and supremacy of a collective spirit over individual experience. Thus, while planters valued religious instruction as a means of manipulating the actions and thinking of Gullahs, the slaves' discretionary adoption and adaptation of certain features of Christianity was a way of articulating and manifesting their common oppression in terms significant for them and also either acceptable or esoteric to slaveholders and missionaries.

(177)
(177)

175
177
177
178

Most Gullahs cared little about didactic features fundamental to Christianity. And while their exposure to the religion was primarily superficial, their acceptance and reinterpretation was essentially practical, reinforcing older traditions. Their limited understanding of Protestantism was observed by antebellum travelers and Methodist missionaries right up to the time of civil conflict. Aptitude had nothing to do with the Gullahs' failure to grasp a firmer knowledge of Protestantism. They shrewdly did what was expected of them without actually internalizing

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

ELEMENTS OF THE HEAD AND THE HEART

261

doctrine. When given the opportunity, they fashioned their own religion. For instance, slaves in the wealthy coastal parish on the Waccamaw peninsula had the atypical experience of receiving, from about 1835 to 1861, very concerted Christian instruction. The rector of All Saints Episcopal Church at Waccamaw was Alexander Glennie of England, who, with several assistants, spent thirty-three years preaching and teaching bondpeople on numerous plantations. Glennie's parish and church were showplaces of the Carolina Coast whenever planters and Southern clergymen wanted to demonstrate how fully they were meeting the spiritual needs of their "people." Glennie himself published a popular book of sermons designed especially for slaves. Hundreds of Gullahs were communicants at All Saints, and "thousands of colored children recited the catechism, intelligently." Observers were impressed with Glennie's effectiveness:

He has been with them so long and is such an amiable kind man that the negroes love him very much and his example has as much influence over them as his preaching. We all went to the negro church one P.M. . . . the congregation responded and sang the Te Deum with Mr. G. . . . When he preached he would go on a while, then stop and ask them questions about what he had gone over and they answered very well.

Yet after the Civil War, returning residents witnessed what they termed "religious deterioration" among the former slaves:

Chapels were taken over by the negroes and soon resounded with barbaric shouting, the accompaniment of the debased Christianity of the emancipated slave. . . . They have forsaken the way which they had learned, and taken to themselves teachers of their own color. Fanaticism and extravagance rule in their assemblies. . . . There are indications of a return to African barbarism.²

During the Yankee occupation, representatives of the American Missionary Association noted that Gullahs were a "religious people," easily inspired to sing and pray profusely. Jesus was "a common theme in their conversation." But observers also noted that Gullahs knew little of "practical religion." Northern teachers commented on how quickly Gullah children memorized their school lessons. Yet the children's knowledge of religion was strangely confused with the current events in which they were caught up. One teacher, after "plainly" explaining to a Sunday School class of large boys the origin of the Ten Commandments and

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

302

THE SOCIORELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

175
796
567
[1986] tinctly the scene. The benches had all been taken outside to make a clear floor. The table with the books was shoved into a corner. A brilliant fire of lightwood was blazing in the chimney and a torch of the same hung in a tin bucket in a corner. Under this bucket the leader stood. She was a visitor. She was 50 or 60 years old, black and scrawney, only a few teeth left in her head. She had been singing for hours but still went on like one possessed. Gleaming with perspiration from head to heel—her dress at the bosom thrown wide open her head thrown back eyes closed, teeth prominent, head kerchief loose and hanging arms bare, clapping and shouting with a shrill ringing voice. I can recall in most of the other Negroes each with a different step, individual and characteristic. Some very much in earnest almost reverential, some heavy and stupid and some enjoying the fun. My grandmother's coachman "Sam" particularly, very black, good looking, smart and mischievous. I can recall the gleam of his eyes as he grinned at us in passing and improvised some peculiar contractions for our special benefit."

771
567
179
[198] For the Gullahs, then, the Christian experience was a means of communal fulfillment on the individual as well as collective level, and plantation life had aspects of an African village in microcosm. Gullahs attempted to exert control over their environment just as their African forbears had. For Africans it was a hostile natural ambience that most threatened the group. For slaves it was an oppressive socioeconomic system that challenged their will to develop self-esteem and social cohesion. Gullahs successfully met that challenge and rose above bondage in a spiritual and communal sense. By combining the edifying features of Christianity and African culture and philosophy, they created a practical folk religion that served them well, under the travail of slavery.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

GULLAH ATTITUDES TOWARD DEATH AND THE SUPERNATURAL 311

It is impossible to reconcile the mind of the native slave to the idea of living in a state of perfect equality, and boundless affection with white people. Heaven will be no heaven to him, if he is not to be avenged of his enemies. I know, from experience, that these are fundamental rules of his religious creed; because I learned them in the religious meetings of the slaves themselves. A favorite and kind master or mistress may now and then be admitted into heaven, but this rather as a matter of favor, due to the intercession of some slave, than as a matter of strict justice to the whites, who will, by no means be of an equal rank with those who shall be raised from the depths of misery, in this world.

The idea of a revolution in the conditions of the whites and the blacks, is the cornerstone of the religion of the latter; and indeed it seems to me, at least, to be quite natural, if not in strict accordance with the precepts of the Bible.⁵

Although the Gullahs did not fear death, they recognized its power; and the passing of one of their number had a profound effect on the community. As has been noted, Methodist missionaries observed this and often tried to use the drama of death among the Gullahs to "bind them to the cross."⁶ But while the Gullahs' perception of life after death was essentially of Christian origin, many practices associated with the dying and the dead were derived from African antecedents.

When death was expected, the plantation community felt compelled to enter into the spirit of the event and vicariously involve themselves in the death throes of the individual, lest when their time came they have to face the ordeal alone, or the deceased, dissatisfied with the send-off, would return and bring evil. The dying person was surrounded by the community, who offered comfort and support. "We got tuh help him cross de ribber," the Gullahs would say. Friends of the dying were expected to bring gifts even though the sufferer could not use them. Such offerings were usually edibles "tuh taste de mou't," but never flowers. Singing, praying, and pious conversation filled the cabin nightly. It was not a solemn time unless sad or obscure circumstances caused the death, but rather was somewhat cheerful, and the subject of death itself was not neglected. Everyone was expected to hold forth as part of the ritual of coaching the dying person to report a heavenly visit or some other evidence of "dying good." When the sufferer drew the last breath, everyone present gave a loud shriek as notification that another soul "done crossed ober." Many Northern teachers were repulsed at the Gullah "death-watch":

This practice of sitting up all night with the dying, H. W. [Harriet Ware] justly enough condemns as "heathenish." "The houses cannot hold them all, of course,

567
797
197

761
(797)
(177)
(778) •

763

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

316

THE SOCIORELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

771
789 assumed that the horseshoe was a "professional sign." However, the insignia was instead a charm against supernatural agencies:

"What is that over your door Elihu?"

"Dat for witches, Massa."

"For what?"

"Witches, Massa. Nebber sleep, no how, widout horseshoe to keep out de witches."¹⁴

761
177
•178 Thus, besides the Christian version of immortality, elements of African tradition also accounted for the Gullahs' attitude toward death, as indeed it did in their attitude about life. As previously stated, existence of spirits of the deceased was not only central to African ontology, but these beings constituted the largest group of religious intermediaries. Hence, Africans viewed death as perhaps the most important rite of passage rather than as the demise of life. Death was a momentous transition, requiring demonstrative evidence that the physical presence of the deceased would be missed. But it was just as necessary to celebrate this passage into the spirit world in a manner that indicated a continued existence. Africans believed that the spirit which survived the body was conscious of all earthly events and had the power to exercise influence over the destiny of the living. Consequently, the death of a clan member was observed with greatest respect and the death commemoration had to be expressed collectively.¹⁵

769 Ancestors were said to retain their normal human passions and appetites which had to be gratified in death as they had been in life. Ancestors felt hunger and thirst. They became angry or happy depending on the behavior of their living "children." If neglected, the living dead were vindictive, but propitious if respected. Just as filial loyalty prevents one from allowing a parent to go hungry, "so must food be offered to the ancestors." Among the BaKongo, food was put out immediately after the burial and palm wine poured over the grave. Survivors believed the deceased would eat the food, and bless those who placed it there.¹⁶

000
764 Among the Gullahs, even for one who "died good," the spirit could not rest if something had been left behind which it desired. It was observed that the Gullahs and other African-Americans placed articles on newly formed graves. These objects were usually personal belongings, broken pottery and porcelain, playthings, lighting utensils, objects pertaining to medicine, food, and water. According to the antebellum mem-

(567)

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

324

EPILOGUE

175 mer slaves, "chiefly colored woman with gay handkerchiefs on their heads,
541 and a sprinkling of men" (since most able-bodied males were in the army).
567 All the blacks reportedly "had the bearing and distinct respectable look
they always had on Sundays and holidays." The services began with a
prayer. The Emancipation Proclamation was read by William Brisbane,
a South Carolinian who freed his slaves before the war. Then the chaplin
presented the colors to the regiment—all according to program. After
the chaplin's introductory remarks, and just as Higginson "took and waved
the flag," but before he began to speak, the "unexpected," and "startling"
occurred. A "strong" but "cracked and elderly" male voice was heard.
Instantly, two female voices blended in as if by "an impulse too strong
to be repressed." They sang:

My Country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing!

They went on "verse after verse" as the people on the platform appeared
stunned. "It seemed the choked voice of a race at last unloosed," Higgin-
son wrote. The rest of the blacks joined in and the whites also began,
but Higginson motioned the latter to silence. "I never saw anything so
electric," he wrote. "It made all other words seem cheap." "Art," wrote
Higginson, "could not have dreamed of a tribute to the day of Jubilee
. . . history will not believe it . . . tears were everywhere." Corporal
Robert Sutton, a favorite of Higginson's, spoke, vowing that no black
soldier would rest until all his brothers and sisters were free. "Boys," he
vowed, "we will take Christ for our Captain who never lost a battle."¹

175 The moment of freedom, more than any event, bound African-Amer-
567 ican to Christianity. Their deliverance from the house of bondage "by
no man,"² as they believed, did more to instill faith in Christianity than
any doctrines taught by whites.

567 Although religious instruction was intended as a conservative element
791 in slave life, and clearly it did not provide the bondspeople with a suc-
197 cessful ideology of revolt, slave religion, a synthesis of African and
178 Christian traditions, was used in a progressive manner by slaves. Their
application of collective moral principles under the guise of Christianity
illustrates how religion can be used effectively to keep a community spir-
itually alive and culturally creative during a period of historical crisis.
Although religion was at the heart of the Gullahs' process of socialization

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

EPILOGUE

325

in the slave quarters, this did not imply total acceptance of a Judeo-Christian concept of reality. The Gullahs broadened the meaning of Christianity, organizing and integrating it into past beliefs and practices. Two traditions formed the basis of the Gullahs' struggle against slavery. The example of Christ allowed them to take a superior attitude toward their oppressors. But they also exerted spiritual and psychological autonomy by clinging to Africanity. In their isolation, the Gullahs remained an uprooted people whose acceptance of Christianity was sometimes outward, selective, and subject to reinterpretations which would not force them to relinquish old ways entirely. Of course, African beliefs, where these remained, accommodated the slave situation just as Christianity, to some extent, accommodated African religion and philosophy. Where Protestantism did not tolerate Africanity as a separate expression, Africanisms sometimes continued through secretiveness or by finding a place at the center of Protestantism as practiced by the slaves.

As Lawrence Levine notes, freedom placed the slaves in a culturally marginal situation, and weakened their "cultural self-containment." No longer were values and cultural standards determined from within the group. African-Americans found themselves in a bicultural situation, absorbing elements of the dominant society in order to obtain recognition and privileges. Perhaps at the moment of freedom the period of accommodation began as a significant factor in black life. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the organization of the black church. This point may be most easily illustrated by the motif of the gospel songs and their otherworldly context, whereas the slave spirituals were full of camouflaged prayers for freedom. As Levine points out, the period after bondage reflects a changing consciousness.³ Slave religion bred radicalism in the early years, and progressivism later. The institutionalized black church, formed after freedom, was far more powerful and independent, but often counseled conservatism.

Sam Polite lived long past bondage. He was over one hundred years old when he prayed the prayer of "The Long Look." He had grown up in slavery, lived through emancipation, reconstruction, restoration, and into the twentieth century of segregation. Still he prayed the prayer of hope. Still he asked for a sign—a look at the future for his people. Polite's prayer implied what history has revealed—that the "New Jerusalem" evaded the African-Americans after freedom. The emancipation experience, born of hope and optimism, brought a new kind of bondage.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

APPENDIX E

Gullah Folkways

- 177 Because they occupied a position of servitude, the Gullahs had to accept
• 178 outwardly, points of view, customs, and beliefs to which they were exposed by the dominant society. Nevertheless, through subtlety and secretiveness they were able to retain some of their previously held beliefs and practices. After slavery, the Gullahs were occasionally willing to share some of their beliefs, customs, and "superstitions" with those readily identifiable as friends, or with those who would not censure the Gullahs for their ways of thinking. Thus a wealth of information about Gullah culture was collected from various sources, but particularly by WPA
127 workers. The following information related to Gullah folk religion and
128 supernatural beliefs provides a mere sample of the material. Unless
178 otherwise stated, this information on Gullah folk beliefs was taken from the WPA files at the South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. Although more research is needed in this area, it was nevertheless possible to trace some of these beliefs to African origins.

Folk Beliefs

- 775
[856] Spirits show themselves to babies more often than to grown people. When
[878] babies smile or cry out in their sleep, it is because some spirit is amusing or troubling them.

- [764] If there is a baby in a house of death, pass the baby over the coffin. This
[789] will prevent the spirit from returning to trouble the baby.

- 845 People born with a caul or veil over their faces are supposed to have
741 strange powers, to foretell the future, see spirits, etc.*

787

[p. 344]

177
• 178 MANY CHANGES have come to Johns Island since Guy and Candie first lived and worked there. Some of the changes—low-cost housing, a health care facility, and a home for the elderly—have been initiated by the islanders themselves. But rapid resort development on Kiawah and Seabrook islands have contributed in their own way to the transformation of Johns Island, bringing new pressures and new challenges to the islanders.

178 One part of Esau Jenkins's legacy is a dedication to progress, to building institutions that enable the people of Johns Island to control their own lives. But another part of his legacy is a dedication to preserving the cultural heritage from which the people of Johns Island draw their strength and their distinctiveness. Not all islanders share both parts of Esau Jenkins's legacy equally. There are some who believe that the cultural heritage created by the ancestors in the bitter days of slavery and segregation is best forgotten. They feel the past as a burden of shame rather than as a source of strength. But without a sense of where they came from, how can the younger generation understand their achievement or comprehend how far they have come?

Whether the next generation will recognize and value the power and beauty of the past is by no means certain. At least some members of the younger generation are drawing strength from the old traditions. They are at home in the present because they are oriented in time as well as in space. Without a sense of where they came from, how else can people know whether they are going forward or backward?

114 If Esau Jenkins were still alive, I believe he would like this new edition of *Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life?* In it Guy and Candie Carawan have preserved the magnificent heritage of the past in such a way that it can serve as a source of strength for the present. Johns Islanders—and all of us—can use that strength as Esau Jenkins did: to look to the future, to see what contribution we can make, to summon our friends to work together to do what still needs to be done.

(P-X-B)

Charles Joyner
December 1988

INTRODUCTION

197
• 1978
[126] IT HAS BEEN more than twenty years since Ais't
You Got a Right to the Tree of Life? was first pub-
lished—twenty-three years since the material was
recorded and the original photographs were taken.
In some ways the world pictured in those pho-
tographs no longer exists. When you visit the is-
land now, you are immediately aware of change.
There are many more houses and signs of pros-
perity. Most of the older, weathered, wooden
homes are gone, replaced by brick or newer wood
ones. The two main roads are heavily traveled now,
primarily by people on their way to the two resort
communities adjacent to Johns Island—Kiawah
and Seabrook. On the major crossroads there are
small shopping centers and in the summer months
produce stands to market vegetables to resort-
goers.

464 In the early 1960s the islanders were hard-
pressed people—maids, cooks, farmhands, and la-
borers. The level of education for most was quite
212 low and yet we found an insight and wisdom about
life, and particularly a richness of folk expression,
that was inspirational. Before Guy came to Johns
114 Island, he had traveled and worked in many parts
of the South. A musician with training in folklore,
he had a keen appreciation for the depth and vari-
ety of southern folk culture. On Johns Island he
found something special, a world with a beautiful
and flourishing cultural heritage unlike any he had
encountered before. He felt it should be shared
with many more people and nurtured in a way that
would enable it to survive. Yet Johns Island was in
the midst of cultural and social transition. How
could he, as a visitor, make a contribution to its
survival? We would spend the two years we lived
[101] on Johns Island in 1963-65 struggling with that
question and trying a variety of projects designed
to focus attention on the cultural richness of the

(P. Xi-A)

114
123 Star Hall to travel to other parts of the country to share their songs, in an effort to keep alive some of the older folk material. Each of these projects brought a complex mixture of success and problems and a renewed determination to keep trying.

131
133 For generations the Johns Island people were relatively isolated from mainstream America. The low, flat island, covered with tidal creeks and marshes, farmland, and forests of oaks draped with gray Spanish moss, was accessible only by boat until the early part of the century, when bridges and causeways connecting it with the mainland began to be built. Cut off from the mainland, these descendants of cotton plantation slaves retained many aspects of the old slave culture: a regional dialect, Gullah, still marked by distinctly African and Caribbean traits; a large body of folktales, cures, and supernatural beliefs; and a folk version of Christianity with a "shouting" style of singing old spirituals and hymns and a local "praise house" form of worship.

344 Old and new institutions existed side by side. For many people, Moving Star Hall—a tiny, battered clapboard building—had been the central meeting place for nearly fifty years. It housed a "tend-the-sick" and burial society, a secret lodge, and a community of worship. Here the members could express themselves freely and fully; in the Sunday night worship service each person took a turn preaching, testifying, praying, and raising a song.

177
794
346 Down the road a mile or so is Wesley Methodist Church, where a number of these same people attended regular Sunday services. Here the old folk ways were gradually being replaced by more formal modern practices. Wesley is a fine church with handsome pews, Methodist hymnals, a robed choir, and an organ. On the first Sunday of the month everyone listened to the Reverend G. C. Brown, who came from the mainland in the 1930s with a college degree, and sang hymns and spirituals led by the choir. But on the three Sundays a month when he preached in other churches, the congregation forgot about the organ and the hymnals and sang older spirituals, hymns, and shouts.

(P XII-A)

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island

796
 533 accompanied only by foot and hand rhythms; the service became much more spontaneous, like that in Moving Star Hall.

197
 178
 796
 (244)
 (794)
 (795) In the intervening years, this evolution toward more modern forms has continued. Moving Star Hall is no longer being used for the intimate and intense prayer meetings or for the all-night watch meetings attended primarily by the older people. These important gatherings now take place in the larger churches. The Hall is currently home to a younger congregation, a Pentecostal church pastored by David Hunter, a member of one of the families very important to the original book: Here you find, along with more modern gospel songs and sermons, echoes of the old form of worship, but with the accompaniment of snare drum replacing the complex hand and foot rhythms of the shout. In the larger island churches, there is a vigorous contemporary religious culture with gospel choirs, wonderful organ accompaniment, and powerful preachers. But the older, more spontaneous forms of expression—raising a song by the spirit, taking it into a shout, testifying and preaching when moved by feelings—are not so easily integrated into the more formal structure of the service. There is a feeling from some of the younger people that it will be no great loss if this older level of expression dies out completely. One member of Wesley put it most succinctly when he explained, "There is a battle going on in the church now to get rid of all the old-style religion and singing. The battle is going on subconsciously. It's not going on knowingly because if it was put on the table, folk would take another look at it." It is our profound hope that people will take another look at it and make sure a place for the older expression remains. For this deepest layer of cultural tradition is marked by great complexity and beauty—the product of generations of community creativity.

178
 494
 (443)
 (529)
 (872)
 (666) In the 1960s the most unusual and modern institution on Johns Island was the Progressive Club, a successful consumers' cooperative owned and operated by some of the poorest people on the island. It contained a large grocery store and the only gym on the island and served as a center for adult education and voter registration.
 (P.Xii-B)

159 good deal. He founded the Committee on Better
(668) Racial Assurance (COBRA), a multi-issue commu-
nity organization in Charleston also serving the sea
islands. He has been chairman of the Charleston
County Democratic party. He ran for state senate
and received support in both the black and white
communities. He is the owner of WPAL, a vital
radio station in Charleston that consistently ad-
dresses social issues as well as responds to the mu-
sical tastes of the community. He was the principal
mediator in the major civil rights campaign of the
Charleston area—a strike of hospital workers in
the late 1960s.

464 The job situation on Johns Island has im-
proved slightly. In the 1960s all young people who
finished high school left the area to find work.
(489) Now, with improved transportation, it is possible
(241) for them to work in Charleston and still live on the
(798) island. The resort developments and the new small
businesses offer some employment, but farming,
long a mainstay in the island economy, is steadily
declining. Farmland is now the prime target of de-
311 velopers. But the people who have stayed on Johns
433 Island have held onto a firm determination to live
in their traditional community, and many of their
hopes and dreams are still in place.

199 Development on Johns Island has taken two
199 forms. Tourist development, spreading rapidly all
along the coastal islands south of Washington,
D.C., is a threat to the indigenous population on
Johns Island. Kiawah and Seabrook, accessible
only by driving across Johns Island, are full-fledged
resort communities with condominiums, hotels
and inns, shops and boutiques, and large private
homes. Both are entered by passing through a se-
curity checkpoint. Viewed initially as offering some
economic and social benefits to island residents,
both have been disappointing, catering to wealthy
visitors from outside the region and offering only
menial and limited employment. Wadmalaw Is-
land, just across the Esau Jenkins Memorial Bridge
from Johns Island, is in the throws of plans for de-
velopment. An island committee made up of black
and white landowners has been meeting regularly
to design their own development plan that may

4: Carawan & Carawan B, Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

891
563 the schools were integrated, and St. Johns, previously all white, became the high school for all island youngsters. Many white parents subsequently put their children into a private academy, but for the youth of the black community, St. Johns High offered new hope. Yet today the school system is still lacking. A desegregation suit against the county school system has been in federal court for six years. Brought by the Justice Department with the NAACP, it charges the Charleston County School Board with maintaining segregation and providing inadequate educational opportunities for minority students.

(691)
(668)

• 178 FOR NEARLY THIRTY YEARS two things have greatly impressed us about Johns Island. One is the continuing process of community education and struggle that enables local people to maintain some measure of control over their institutions and their lives. The other is the rich Afro-American cultural life on the islands. Given the pressures of development and economic survival, the need to address contemporary issues with sophisticated tactics, what will survive of the older sea island culture? Public interest has certainly grown in coastal culture, language, and history on both a popular and scholarly level. In addition, there have also been patterns of change in the community and the cultural choices made by island people.

545 The Moving Star Hall Singers, a family group who began traveling nationally when we lived on Johns Island, continues to travel and to share religious music, folktales, children's game songs, and life experiences in a range of settings. They are widely recognized as outstanding carriers of the oldest layer of Afro-American cultural expression in the United States. In more recent years they have been invited to perform in local situations, including the Spoleto Festival held annually in Charleston. In the summer of 1988 they performed at a national festival of Afro-American arts in Atlanta.

159 In 1984 Mrs. Janie Hunter received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endow-

(P-XIV-B)

4. Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island

159 ment for the Arts. Here is how the NEA described her:

159
 533

Sea Island people are noted for their retention of African cultural influences and for their creation of a rich body of game, work and religious songs, stories and craft skills. Janie Hunter is the matriarch of a family notable there for its musical artistry. Her voice is as strong and clear as a clarion bell and she carries in her memory a large repertoire of religious songs. Many of these came from her father, Joe Bligen, a fisherman and part-time farmer. Mrs. Hunter is an artistic decision-maker as well as a singer for the Moving Star Hall Singers, a group named for a Praise House on Johns Island.

(545)

The music heard in Moving Star Hall is joyous, a music in celebration of life, freedom, and a deeply felt religious optimism, the dawning of a better world. Mrs. Hunter and her friends and family sing not only with their voices, but with their hands and feet as well.

159

Like many other folk artists, Janie Hunter is multi-talented. She carries in her memory a collection of animal stories. They are for the amusement of children and adults, but they also show the uses of wit and logic. Mrs. Hunter is a maker of quilts and of dolls, a keeper of folk medicine techniques. She learned and remembered all these skills, and she is also an activist and transmitter. She has trained her children and the children of neighbors to respect and keep the beauty and artistic self-sufficiency of an important American place.

Mrs. Hunter felt she represented the island community when she was recognized for her cultural knowledge. When she traveled to Washington to receive the award, a vanload of family and friends from Johns Island went with her and joined in a jubilant shout as part of the Heritage award concert. When she returned to Johns Island, she was honored by her church, Wesley Methodist, and valued as a teacher in their own series on Afro-American heritage. Also recognized that same year by the NEA was a basketmaker from the Charleston low-country, Mrs. Mary Jane Manigault.

The older people will not lose their heritage. It is already too much a part of them. But they have

• 178
 887

(P XV-A)

128
887 fewer and fewer places to collectively express their wisdom and their traditions. With the testimonial meetings no longer taking place at the small praise houses, they gather in the larger churches or in the senior citizen centers. But as they explain, "You can't feel yourself in such a large place," or, "You can't really shout on a cement floor covered with carpet." And who will help the younger people recognize and value the strength and beauty in the older forms of cultural expression?

When we were on the islands in December 1967, we went to a Christmas party for senior citizens from centers on each of the five islands—about two hundred people, all from the older generation, attended. At each of these centers regular gatherings are held, and singing and sharing stories and remembrances are a vital part of the meetings. For all the interest of a wider public in sea island culture, it would seem that this kind of gathering in the community on a regular basis is the most encouraging thing of all.

887
86 Even more important, what these elders know must be readily accessible to the children and the younger people on the island. Surely in some homes and in some churches it is. It would be wonderful if it were also part of the school system. Mrs. Hunter is occasionally invited to a school in the Charleston area to share what she knows, but as she explains, many older people know what she knows if only they were encouraged more actively to pass it on. In the Johns Island senior center Mrs. Maggie McGill has organized a group that includes her mother (Mrs. Maggie Russell) and others, all of whom are wise in the old ways. The Senior Lights have recently begun to give programs of sea island spirituals and shouts in the Charleston area. In February 1989 they represented the coastal region in a conference at the Smithsonian Institution focusing on congregational song and worship traditions in black communities.

219 One very encouraging development in the Charleston area is the work of the Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture. One of its goals is to maintain an archive of material from the Afro-American people of the lowcountry.

(P XV-8)

Mr. Joe Deas

WE BEEN CLIMBING ON THE ROUGH SIDE
 OF THE MOUNTAIN

159
 735

From the time I have sense enough to recollect in this world, we have trouble and crosses, ups and downs. We been climbing on the rough side of the mountain—climbing up, falling back, grabbin' bottom.

(262)

Way back yonder, in 1893, we had to work for something to eat. Work on the white folks' farm, move from place to place, eat with stick for spoon. Got oshter, fish, crab and 'tato. Get corn meal, carry 'em to the mill and grind 'em and eat corn meal. Sweet potato. All that just to bring us this far. And I say thank God that I live to see light come into the world. Wise man from all part of the world come into *this* world. The world is lifting up more and more.

(561)

My old parents didn't see these things—automobile, airplane. We come from rowboat time. Had to row from home to town and back. Sometime I have to stay a whole day; have to wait on the tide, all that to row. And God spare us live to see this day.

(492)
 (493)

We used to drive with ox and cart, haul wood with old oxen, plow with oxen. All that. Today no oxen. Nothing but car and truck and bus and trailer and all kind of thing like that.

159
 735
 178
 262

Okd days you couldn't eat nothing but 'tato and peas and corn and corn flour and crab and all like them. Well these days it's Christmas every day. Anything you want now you get 'em. In them days back, if one somebody kill a hog in the community, you think it was Christmas by the hog only. But now, eat hog meat any day you want. Go from store to store to get the thing you want. It's Christmas every day now for we. Light come into the world. Them times we had to buy, and money was so little, you can't see your way to buy what you need for live. Had to make out 'til we leave the white folks' place and then start to come up.

735
 178

It's a blessing we see the day. Everybody lifting up. God put a way to your brains to catch on to these things, that you may have bread to carry you 'til He ready for you. The world is comin' up and is wise and wise and wise, until we *all* can get some bread from God. Man ain't able to give 'em, God put 'em into that man that he can share around to the next brother.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island

Mrs. Janie Hunter

**ASH CAKE IS SOMETHING YOU BAKE
 IN THE CHIMBLEY**

735
 252

Way back yonder the old lady and them had some hard times. Had to take water out the creek to cook with. They'd cook ash cake. Ash cake is something you bake in the chimbley—in the fire hearth. You have the fire hot and burn down to ashes. You mix the corn meal and you open the ashes and place the corn meal in the ashes. You haul the coals on it, and it come to a brown. After you take 'em off the hearth, you wash 'em in something call dishpan and you put it on the table and let it cold. Cut it open with the knife, and you call that ash cake.

735
 292

In the old time you couldn't afford to buy coffee or tea. We'd take the corn off the cob, break the corn off the stalk and put it in the chimbley hearth and let it burn. You have a pot of water on the fire, and when the corn burn you drop it in the pot and that turn coffee. You drink that along with ash cake. For tea, you take grits and put a frying pan on the fire, let the grits parch 'til brown. Then you pour water in the pan and that turn tea. Call 'em grits tea.

735
 198

Yeah boy, we come through a great tribulation. But there's freedom now. You can get anything you want if you got the money.

Mr. Willie Hunter

735
 159
 262
 (241)

WE SEE MEAT, BUT WE DON'T GET IT

My aunty raised me from a little baby, 'cause I ain't know my mother, neither father. He raise me up on his farm, was plant cotton, and peas, potatoes, and all. For dinner we eat peas and some corn grits, little sweet potato, and drink some water. And after that we go back in the field, pick some more cotton, dig some more 'tato. We see meat, but we don't get it. They had little meat in the soup, you know, boil with the peas or turnip, and cook with some meat in it, but you don't get none for we children, 'cause wouldn't have that much meat for give we, understand?

Mrs. Janie Hunter

THEY WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT THE PAST

159
 178
 869
 869
 829

I tell you, young people got a lot chance to think more in their age than I had to think in my days. 'Cause I couldn't think 'bout nothing but plant peas and corn in my days. But now these children got so much different thing to go through and learn, and they got nice schools. If they don't learn, it's nobody's fault but their own. Then I try to teach them these stories and different song and let them know what blues was like in my days coming up. My children like it. They sit down and they want me to talk about the past. They enjoy hearing it. I want them to know about it, so when I gone there be somebody to carry it on.

Mrs. Isabel Simmons

LIFE IS VERY DIFFERENT NOW

178
 829
 770
 178
 829
 209

The old times was hard, but we still need religion right now. Life is very different now.

There is so much television here now; you didn't had that. It don't make life easier for me; it make 'em hard 'cause people stay home more. Lot don't go to church and different thing because they stay for see story. In them time only story you would hear tell, you tell your own story. This time, you watch television for story.

And the children now, they watch the TV and they take the thing on the TV to do just what they doing now. They think what is on the TV is real. But them time there doesn't be that kind of killing and shooting and cutting up like what going on now. Once in a while you hear about somebody die, but don't never hear about nobody get killed.

Mrs. Alice Wine

EVERYBODY SITTING ON THEIR OWN STOOPS

178
 829
 571
 571

'Course that day, coming in 1919, all around like that, people was more friendly to one another. People come and sit with you and read the Bible. But these days you don't find anybody come visit. Everybody sitting on their own stoops. You don't find nobody to my house. When you're sick, people used to go around and have meeting for you and pray for you. Now the people who live in the house with the sick people got to come and ask somebody come pray for them. But before, people know you is sick. Not now. That's done pass.

I REALIZE I'M HERE FOR SOME PURPOSE

159
794

159
794
533
(869)

And I found out that's better.

THIS IS GOOD, BUT IT DOESN'T HELP YOUR EATING

159
794
796
786
• (78)

159
771
128
829
794
796

That Moving Star Hall business just about died out completely. Then they started building it back up again. Now some of the people, the Moving Star Hall Singers, are enjoying some of the fruit of their labor.

Mr. Esau Jenkins

OUT OF EGYPT I AM GOING TO CALL MY SONS

159 Now if anybody is happy, it ought to be Esau Jenkins, the person who
185 is talking here to you. Why? Twelve years and some months ago in this
443 community, I organized a club—what we call the Progressive Club.
474

You folks have helped me start as a man and form a group. You are selling groceries, you are selling gasoline. Besides that, some time the early part of this month you have paid out all your debt and yet left \$175 to add to your store.

159 When I organized this Progressive Club, I could count the number of
185 voters on my one hand, and I don't have but five fingers.

178 In twelve years you have caused this whole island to change. Today you got school buses running by your door and picking up your children, carrying them to a high school on Johns Island. Today you can say that my children will be educated—at least get a high school education on Johns Island.

(666) Today you could say in the last election we built up our voting strength so high until the white men in Charleston have to ask us to be in the polls on Johns Island and Edisto and Wadmalaw. Negroes have helped work for the Democratic party.

Now you could not have said that twelve years ago because you didn't vote. You didn't have a school. But today you have children getting ready to compete with anybody's children, because of your cooperation.

My friends, I want you to help me that I may go on, come what may. There are any number of times that I have walked alone. There are a lot of people who are afraid, because if they be seen walking along with me, the white folks might say, "Well, he is one of these persons who are fighting me."

But share it with Esau Jenkins, and thank God that God has helped us. We made an achievement that we are not ashamed of. You don't know how much you have done, friends—how many people are talking about what you have done; how many people are reading about what you have done.

Together let us go—sisters, brothers, blacks, whites, yellows, whatnot. We are all God's people, so we got to go together. And friends, I think all over the world today, people who love freedom are saying this morning, "Out of Egypt I'm going to call my sons."

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

**PEOPLE DON'T SEE THAT "BIG SANTA CLAUS".
THEY ONCE THOUGHT OF**

179
464

People saw what happened when all that money came in with Kiawah and yet no one that I know got in any of those administrative positions out there. You find a few people got into the more menial jobs. Ninety percent of the jobs are in the lowest level, and then maybe five to ten percent are in a higher bracket, but not up in the really well-paid bracket. So people don't see that "big Santa Claus" they once thought of.

Mr. William Saunders

**THEY WERE NEVER CONCERNED ABOUT THE
PEOPLE THAT LIVE ON THOSE ISLANDS**

185

I get pretty upset about things. There was a million dollars spent on turtles on Kiawah, because these people were concerned about the turtles. But they were never concerned about the people that live on those islands.

177
491

Still, as long as I can get some help from those people, then I didn't have any problem with their lives. The moment all those rich people begin staying on Kiawah and Seabrook, they begin to improve the roads. Although it was built for them, I use it. It's accessible to everyone. And the people on Kiawah

• (178)

and Seabrook are pretty much conservationists, so they back most anything leaving things the way they are.

133



4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island



Mrs. Ethel Grimboll
THAT IS GREAT PROGRESS

When I walk on Johns Island and I stand in the yard and look at the nursing home, look at the lab, look at the clinic, and look across the street at the housing project, I feel like that is great progress. I'm sure that the low cost housing project added ten to twenty years to the life span of a lot of those people who live there because of the living conditions they had prior to that. They feel comfortable, they feel more secure, and they feel good about themselves. And then if anyone gets sick or doesn't feel well, all they have to do is walk across the street to the clinic. And that is great progress.

There's a fight right now to keep it going, because of political reasons, but it's still great progress. That was one of the things my father spoke about—the health care on these islands. I wish he were here to see it.*

*Mrs. Grimboll is the daughter of Essau Jenkins.

Mr. William Saunders

**THE SEA ISLAND HEALTH CARE CORPORATION
WAS A POWER BASE**

178
185
94
[734]
[737]
[665] I think the housing, the health care facility, you have to look at it as an elevation, an improvement. We had the foresight with the health center to add the nursing home and the home for the elderly, so even when they took our health center grant away from us, we owned the building and we owned the property. The health center is now being run by the City of Charleston. The taking over was really a political party fight. In 1980 the Republican party needed to be able to say that they got something going on in the community, so what they did, they found problems with a lot of stuff that was already there—got rid of the Board, got a new Board, and allowed it to function.

185
94
[734]
[662] Anytime you're talking about being able to control something, anytime you're talking about power, then you're talking about something real that was done. The Sea Island Health Care Corporation was a power base that we put together that exists. It really exists today. We've got forty acres of very choice land. The city now wants twelve acres of it. That's the kind of thing where Esau and others were thinking ahead and did things in advance, and we planned that one way ahead of everybody. And it's there. We've got control of the nursing home and the housing.

Mr. William Saunders

**THERE'S A LOT OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
HEALTH AND POVERTY**

Our goal for the Comprehensive Health Center was that it would serve everybody on the islands and would be totally independent. The first director, Jim Martin, was a real strategist. He and I used to spend hours dreaming and scheming about what could be, how you could work politically within the system and make things work. Jim was a past master at that.

[758]
[461] Beyond just providing health services, for awhile the Health Care Corporation was the biggest employer on the island. We found that when people were working, they were healthier simply because they were making their own living. There's a lot of relationship between health and poverty.

741
758
743
[427] We were looking to be able to sell health care to Kiawah and to Seabrook and to the other big interests on the island, which would have actually made the health center self-sufficient. You would not have needed any governmental money. We were just about there when they took it away from us. We don't have control of the daily operation of the clinic. But the people who are using it have to pay us rent. It's a good bit less service than it used to be. But it could come back. The whole facility is there, so the possibilities are unlimited.

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

**I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE OF PEOPLE
WHO REALLY MADE A DIFFERENCE
IN THESE ISLANDS**

554 Sometimes people don't recognize the hard work of people behind the scenes. I'll give you an example of people who really made a difference in these islands. Mrs. Alleen Brewer Wood came to Johns Island in 1929. Her husband, Rev. Brewer, was the pastor of two churches on the island. She was quite a community person. She would help with anything that needed doing. (1959) These were the days when people depended on root medicine and midwifery, what I call indirect health care. It was not the approved method of health care, but people had their own methods for taking care of problems. Mrs. Wood was around in that time when we were trying to get people to feel better about themselves, and trying to teach them about self-respect. She was one of the persons that we call the "grandmoms of the islands," instrumental in so many little things that you don't hear that much about. She helped lay down some of the foundation for the projects that came to Johns Island. Later on she taught the Citizenship School classes on Edisto.

554 Rev. McKinley Washington was one of those people that my daddy really 793 relied on. He would call him up every Sunday morning before church and talk over with him the things he would like to see discussed in church—voter registration or whatever the issue was. He was just a young minister in those days, right out of school. He started the NAACP here. And later they formed (668) a group from the Presbyterian church called the Self-Development of People (794) to deal with the needs of people on Edisto. They bought an old school building (used to be the school for the white kids) and used it as a community building.

• (198) When Esau was working through the Charleston Citizens' Committee, which took in all of the sea islands, Rev. Washington was his connection for Edisto and Yoncos islands. People were always reluctant about how fast to move to bring about change. They will go with you for awhile, but then if it looks like you're not giving up, some will want to put the brakes on. So Esau had to have people that would keep that motivation going. And McKinley was one of those people. He's a real good speaker. His voice is deep and heavy, and when he starts preaching, you have to listen to him. So my daddy used him as an inspirator.

When Rev. Willis Goodwin came to Johns Island to pastor in 1966, people just looked on the ministry as church on Sunday. When Rev. Goodwin got here he changed all that. His ministry was seven days per week. He would go around to the people who were sick or were in need—and everybody was in

Mr. Gerald Mackey

**YOU NEVER KNOW THE NUMBER OF LIVES
YOU TOUCH**

821
825
[464] The employment situation for young people nationwide is extremely frustrating. I work with the division of personnel for the Charleston County School District. We have problems getting black teachers in the school system. For example, Charleston County hired approximately 224 teachers at the beginning of the school year and approximately 21 of the 224 were black. When you look at the racial composition of the district, you have more black than white students. So we have a problem with black teachers and administrators coming into the district. It's one of the reasons why the desegregation suit brought by the Justice Department and others is now going on.

[177] In some schools in the county, we have no black teachers. In some of the larger schools, you might have two or three. There is no equity in student-teacher ratio in terms of black and white. So the kids have very few black role models in terms of teachers. That's a very sad indictment on a system when kids come up from kindergarten through high school and not see a black teacher. Another argument that we make in the county is that blacks are not going into teaching. They're considering other options like science or math, and they're going into the industries. They're studying computer science and engineering and medicine, and they're not going into teaching. But it's going to be sad again for the kids.

[554] I wouldn't trade my experience of being a classroom teacher for anything in the world. You never know the number of lives you touch. Teaching is very rewarding.

Mr. Abraham Jenkins

**I THINK THAT'S A STEP IN THE
RIGHT DIRECTION**

• 178
185 With the Sea Island Health Care Corporation, the Citizens' Committee, the Ministerial Alliance, Johns Island's going to be a better place to live. With the dedication we have now we have turned that exodus of young people leaving the island around. We have seen some engineers and attorneys and professional people coming back home to live. And if they're not living here, they're still making a contribution by coming back periodically, making their presence known, sharing their knowledge, or making a financial contribution. There's much more of that now than there was ten years ago. I think that's a step in the right direction.

Mrs. Bernice Robinson

**ALL THIS IS AN OUTGROWTH OF PEOPLE
FEELING EMPOWERED**

178
871
185
743
730
734
362

On Johns Island you see the results now really, the aggressiveness of the people and the confidence they had in moving forward, when you look at the sea island clinic, and you look at the senior citizen center and the nursing home and the housing project for senior citizens. All this is an outgrowth of people feeling empowered by being able to read and write and understanding how to go about pressing for things like that. They became very active in the PTA and things that they didn't bother with before because they couldn't read or they couldn't understand what was going down. Before they had a high school on the island, a lot of people who had relatives over here in the city would send the children over here to go to school, to try to get an education. And they had to do that for a long time before they got the high school.

873

But all these things that finally came about, came about from these same people that learned how to read and write and fight for their kids to get a decent education right in their own home rather than having to cross the bridge to come into town to get an education.

Mrs. Ethel Grimball

**WE'RE GOING TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATES
WE WANT**

666
665

People are still voting today. Blacks now rule Wadmalaw Island for the Democratic party. Before this, the white people in the Democratic party brought a slate in and then they immediately passed that slate. My father and others said, "We're not going to go along with a slate that they bring in. We're going to vote for the candidates we want." And that's how we changed that situation on Wadmalaw Island. After the voter registration drives, the people got more interested in the importance of voting. Therefore, we got a lot of people on the books. Eighty-five percent of the population on Wadmalaw is black. Most of the whites left the Democratic party when the blacks got control of it. Before that the whites ruled everything on Wadmalaw Island. It was the tradition.

162

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island



Mrs. Alice Wine

EVERYTHING IS CHANGED NOW

178
662

I still vote. I want to vote for right, but I don't get it. My mother always told me, "You see somebody that jump, you jump too. Cause you, one, can't do nothing. Among the majority, your word just go for nothing." But the people gave us our right, seems like they take our right from us. But it don't stop me from vote. I still vote for the President.

178

And everything is changed now. The world so tough today.

The older people sang "I Will Overcome" because they had a hard time. They had to row boat to go to the city and carry their peas and corn and potatoes, rice and things. They had a hard time, living and raising their children. Them people had to work with their children on their back. Rebeltime people were mean. But God changed those people. That's a just God. He don't walk knock-kneed. Those oldtime foreparents was something else, I tell you. And one of these days they were able to overcome. They were able to buy the land. Money was scarce, but they had a chance to pay a dollar or two dollars for a piece of ground.

Mrs. Idell Smalls

**I WANT THE YOUTH TO BE PROUD
OF WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE'RE FROM**

159 I was born on Yonges Island. My mother was a farm worker, my father an oyster picker. I attended elementary and high school here on the island, but my family could not afford to send me to college. Instead I worked on the farm and restaurants to help my mother raise six children. I married and lived for a time in Washington, D.C. I returned to the island for a visit and decided it was time to move home.

159
179 In 1985 I had the opportunity to go to Nairobi, Kenya. I had an experience that is hard to put into words. Being there, I could feel, smell, and relive my childhood through tradition, dialect, customs, and being able to look at my people there in Nairobi and see my family in South Carolina in their faces. On returning home I wanted to instill in the youth and adults the importance of holding onto our heritage and African customs, because not many of us will ever get to Africa to experience what I did. I wanted the youth to be proud of who we are and where we're from.

159
186
178 The trip helped me address some of the problems our teens were having, such as being teased about the Gullah dialect, which is a mixture of African and American speech. We began to develop a play called "In Celebration of Us." Each teen adopted a senior at the senior center and began interviewing her about her life. The teens wrote and produced the play.

159
186
178
183 We're focusing on changing images and instilling self-respect in the young adults of the sea islands through economic and cultural survival development.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 Johns Island

142
 291



Ms. Elaine Jenkins

**I GET MY STRENGTH FROM THE OLDER
 PEOPLE ON THESE ISLANDS**

888

I don't know how other young people feel, but I get my strength from the older people on these islands. My mother is one of them. I like to talk to my mother and her friends. When we get together, we always go back to the old days. And those days were hard days.

533
 182

The songs at Wesley, I mean the songs that the older people raise from the floor, those things do something for me. The music is a vital part of that service. There's almost a song for every feeling and mood. I can only talk about Wesley, but I don't think there's any danger of the older songs dying out there. Those songs are being passed down from the old people. Like Mrs.

• (178)

Hunter—Mrs. Hunter's children and her grandchildren. And then I hear them, and I'm sure other people hear them, and you write down the words.

216
 186

My brother Bill has been doing a lot of videotaping and the folk don't mind. We hope to just hold onto those things and put them aside for safe-keeping for the others who'll be coming along. Talking to the older people about the old days when there was really no connection to the city, they had to be self-sufficient. I don't think any of those things will ever be lost.

Mrs. Janie Hunter

WHAT I KNOW I TRY TO TEACH MY CHILDREN

186
538
173
867
869
186
178
867
869

When I come up, my parents sat us down on Sunday afternoon after church and taught us stories, and their life stories—how they came up. Some of my great-grandparents came up in slavery times, and all these stories and folktales that I tell are from way back in the history of slavery times.

And what I know I try to teach my children—my seven daughters and six sons, and ninety-five grandchildren, and twenty-four great-grands, so as the generations go on, it won't die out. I think the past is very important for them to understand. We don't know what the future will bring. So maybe the future will bring back the past. There's a lot of people on this island, older than I am, they know all about the past, but they feel so embarrassed to explain about it. They figure people are going to look down on them as nothing. But I always say, "I am just what I am." And what I want my children to know that when I'm gone, my children can teach their children.

(538)

So, I have over thirty head of children come to my home on Sunday afternoons and I teach them different things that it's important for them to know. They rather hear stories and folktales. I think if all the mothers would teach what they know, they would keep their children out of trouble. They would have something to build upon. They'd have something to look forward to. But to just turn them loose and not let them know what to expect, that's why children be in so much shock when things happen to them. It's our parents' task to teach our children.

186
533
(534)

The songs tell stories too—the religious songs and the blues songs. Those songs gave us a feeling to go on. That's all we had to live by. We sang and the games we played. We didn't go to piccolo or none of that—there wasn't any of that in those times. We take a tub and washboard and make our own music. On Sunday evening my father's house was full up. We sing and shout and feel good about it. We had a good time. We didn't be sick. We didn't get in no trouble. Everybody loved one another. And we still love to sing. That is our talent God bless us with. We love to sing and we love people. We love to get along with everybody. We was brought up like that.

Mr. Benjamin Bligen

**I FIND NO FAULT LIVING HERE
ON THE ISLAND**

823 Johns Island is my home. I was born and raised here and it's peaceful. I've traveled across different parts of the world and I love different places, but I love Johns Island the best. There's peace and quiet here and nice places to go if you feel like travel. You can go in the river. You can go swimming if you want to. You can go fishing if you want to. You can go crabbing if you want to do that. You can go and sing and shout if you want to; no one to stop you. I find no fault living here on the island. I love it here. I make up my mind to be here until the Lord make a change in my life, to take me on home.

533 The singing brings joy to your soul. Regardless of how much you feel down and you feel like you can't move, you start singing one of those songs and it brings joy to your soul and lifts you up. You start thinking about the good things, and we realize we've got somebody on our side. We're trying to pass it on to the younger folks so they can carry the old traditions on. Our old folks taught us these songs and they would like for we to carry it on through and they would like for we to pass it on to the young generation so they can keep it up. And I hope that many and many that come to our different churches will hear these songs and sing these songs and will be able to carry it on when the older ones have passed on out of this world.

771
869 It's a different time now than when I was growing up. It's harder now to get the young people to come on the old side. My family had a strong religion. I try to keep on the road that they was traveling on and do the things they want me to do. Hopefully, I will be able to teach the young people the way that my old folks taught me, that they will have something that will stand by them when trouble rise. Whatever comes up against them in life they will have something to hold onto, something that will deliver them in the time of their need.

Mrs. Ruth Bligen

I LIKE TO BE ALONG WITH THE OLD PEOPLE

533
 794
 (796)
 (888)

In church we have a lot of different choirs. But if you want to raise a song, you do that. Sometimes I'll sing. Sometimes Benji will sing. We have a good time. Our pastor is very nice. He likes singing, too. He likes singing and shouting. On Thursday nights, we have prayer meeting at the church. You express yourself and pray. It's like in the hall. The young children are not going to carry on like the old people. But I like the old people. I like to be along with the old people. And we had some wonderful times in Moving Star. I don't think the old songs will die out. We still sing it. I love the old songs.

Mr. William Saunders

**IT'S THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE
 SINK OR SWIM**

771
 794

I feel I am more fortunate than most of the people who are fighting in the arena I'm fighting in because I have a way to recharge my batteries. The religious aspect of my life is pretty real to me. It gives me a lot of strength. Wesley has been my power base. It has made me feel capable of doing anything.

794
 533
 796

It's real to me. The singing of a person like Ruth Bligen. To hear her some Sunday morning. Her voice is purer now than it's ever been. She just gets to the place that she passes out. Just knowing what she's been through, when she sings it's not a performance. You can see Benji on a Sunday morning. He's so articulate and his Gullah becomes more profound than most people because he says it so distinctly. But to see him pray and he gets to a point where he's got to stop, and somebody's got to go and take him down because of his problems.

771
 794
 178

It's the place where people sink or swim. And it's the only thing they have to turn to. And yet they're always walking with their heads held high. And that's a strength that the people had on the island that I believe is dying. That strength and the proudness is not there anymore like it used to be. Sometimes you skip a generation, for whatever reason. So maybe the cycle will come back again.

But it's a base for me. It's my power source. I come back to the city, where I can go for another six days with all of the adversities that face me.

Mrs. Alice Wine

A LOT OF PEOPLE MISS IT

344
346
796
198

We don't have class meeting in the hall anymore. I miss it. We don't have it now because all these young preachers have everything to the church. What are a few people going to do in a big old church like that? If the people turn out, it never be too large. I like to go to the hall cause you can have your way. You can exercise better. You can feel yourself. You can do the same thing in the church, but the church so big.

178
796

We used to have watch meeting on Christmas night. We turn out in the hall and be there until sunrise. On New Year's, people go all night and be there til New Year roll in. We pray and sing until New Year roll in, then they go to preaching. And about five or six o'clock, then the ladies take over to testify. You don't find that now. Some people can't even say their prayers.

A lot of people miss it. These people is too funny. I can't figure how people could change so fast. Everybody go down to the church. They have watch meeting there, but they don't go but half the night. The hall go until day broad clean. Sometime people shout there until eight or nine o'clock in the morning. We have crowd from all different place—Wadmalaw and Mt. Pleasant and James Island. Ooh man, that hall is packed.

484
694
198

It's too dangerous now to walk to the hall at night. You don't find nobody walking this road no more. It's not the cars only, people do wicked. People will kill you and knock you down and do all kind of thing with you, no, no. When you see my door shut, it's shut. I don't come out.

178
533

The people don't have no old songs now, the people have new songs. And I don't know one of them. When they start to sing, I just shut my mouth. Nothing but new songs now. Ain't got a taste to it. Ain't got a spirit in it. But when the old people used to start to sing those old songs, and it's time to go to church, man, you run.

Mr. William Saunders

**I LIKE THE HISTORY OF IT, AND TO KNOW
THAT I HAVE BEEN A PART OF IT**

- 178
829 You might take the position that people who live in the culture recognize it as something real great. Most of the time people from outside recognize it a whole lot more than the people that live it everyday. You're talking about people who have done a lot of hard work and been through a lot of hell. But if you can come in and see it, it's so nice and quaint. "I just love to see the quaint little way that they talk," and so on. Folk don't see themselves in that way. Many folk have tried to get rid of that culture that you're talking about.

(571) I don't miss being in Moving Star Hall at all. The way that I like to miss Moving Star Hall and some of the things of the past is to reminisce. But I would not like to be back in it. I like the history of it, and to know that I have been a part of it. I do miss that tradition when Moving Star and all the lodges used to come together on Labor Day. That was a festive time with food and a parade. They used to play flute and drums. That was really exciting.

At certain ages we used to go to Moving Star Hall, and the young people would stand outside and burn tires until almost time for them to have whatever they're going to eat and then you're going to go inside. That's the part that really used to be nice because guys would be talking so much jokes, those stories about the monkey and the baboon; people doing the dozens.

(571) People probably do miss things like the Hall, but there is a lot of community concern and coming together still going on. I still have certain places on the island where I will go on a Thursday or a Friday night, and I'll just slip in and catch up on everything that has gone on. You just sit and all the information passes on. There's a kind of camaraderie that comes out of that.

I always believe that things just move to other levels. Another generation takes it to another level.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

Mrs. Janie Hunter

WE HAVE TO KEEP IT ALIVE

829

198

186

I want to see my children go on, as long as people want to hear them and they've got the voice. It means a lot to me and it means a lot to them. If they stop, it's going down. We have to keep it alive.

You've got to talk and give people an understanding about what you're talking about—the background and where it came from. That's very important. The young people don't know many of the things that happened. It takes somebody who came out of this experience to teach them and tell them the meaning of it and what it can do for them. I have the experience 'cause that's all I was doing my whole life. My parents and grandparents talked all about how they came up, and I took it in.

197
 198
 • Today Mrs. Russell talks about not being able to visit her old crabbing spot; she is kept from her homeplace by guards and gates. Ms. Elaine Jenkins straddles the old and new ways trying to show people how not to lose their land. Bill Saunders talks about development and change in a way that is based on his dreams for the indigenous people of the island community; the new developers, on the contrary, want to keep the people off the new vacation spots unless they are employed there, usually in menial jobs.

241
 198
 198
 291
 233
 268
 Today's Sea Island Comprehensive Health Care Corporation grew out of the Rural Mission, Inc., and the Progressive Club, begun by Esau Jenkins and nurtured by those who struggled with him to bring about change. Their efforts gave much to the local community and to the larger movement. This was the home of the first citizenship education class; "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize, Hold On" passed from Alice Wine to Guy Carawan to the Nashville sit-ins to movement communities throughout the South.

128
 121
 To walk through this book again is to walk through time. The first edition of the book introduced us to the old songs and the Moving Star Hall and its worship tradition. It described the islanders' yearnings and planning for change. The Carawans were beginning to share the music and culture of this community through folk festivals and programs throughout the nation. In this first book one feels the storm of change in the sound of a unique nineteenth-century black American voice.

197
 198
 And now we have this new edition of the book loaded with some of the same voices speaking through yet another decade; and we see and hear the voices and concerns of the children who walk and seek to extend their roads. We see the outsiders with intentions that have nothing to do with the survival of the communities they found as they moved into the islands. The questions and fears are for the youth and their future. Their voices are heard only as whispers in the minds and hearts of their parents. The questions are: Will they continue? And how and where and what of this rich legacy will they harvest to pass on?

(P-236-B)

Bernice Johnson Reagon

167 ages 25 and 35 migrated out of the region (Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council, 1972). Many of these young people send their children back to the area to be reared by older relatives in a safer environment than the cities can provide, and many return themselves in later life. But the fact remains that the region is losing its young black men and women in great numbers. These migration patterns are no doubt an important contributing factor to the rapid language changes now underway for much of the black population in the region.

[197]

5.4 Relationship Between Social Factors and Linguistic Variation

121 By noting which individual speakers are most ad-
193 vanced in the language change discussed in Chapter 4, it is
• 178 possible to show an association between social factors dis-
cussed in this chapter and the pattern of variation described
in the previous chapter. The progression of change for the
three linguistic variables was found to be: first, the
complementizer; next, the pronouns; and last, the preposi-
tion. The language use of the sixteen speakers described in
the present chapter is reflected in Table 5 of Chapter 4.
(See page 108.) Along the implicational scale shown there,
only a younger and a middle aged island woman (Speakers 14
and 9) are shown to use exclusively standard at in the prepo-
sitional category, the one most resistant to change. For
the third person pronouns, all four young and middle aged

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

Georgetown

134

121 island women use standard forms categorically. Standard
193 forms for the complementizer are used categorically by a
178 more diverse group of speakers: all island men and women in
121 the middle aged group, young island women, one older main-
193 land man and one older island woman. Island men in the
178 oldest and youngest groups and mainland women in the oldest
184 group retain creole forms across all three grammatical cate-
gories. Figure 11 indicates which speakers are most resist-
ant to change, according to sex, age, and community member-
ship. Group I is moving most rapidly toward standard forms,
while Group III is most resistant to change. Older island
women and older mainland men are somewhere in between Group
II and III, as indicated by the categorical use of standard
forms for the complementizer by one speaker in each of these
two groups.

121 In a small number of speakers, carefully matched for
19 sex, age, and social group, it has been possible to find
194 systematic linguistic variation for three morpho-syntactic
561 categories. The activation and progression of linguistic
562 change in these categories are related to the social factors
of speaker sex, age, community, and mobility. Those in the
forefront of change are young and middle aged women in the
island community who have available to them, through occupa-
tional roles reserved to their sex, opportunities to parti-
cipate in a variety of speech events in which standard English
is used. Those most resistant to change are also women,

121
19
184
561
562

- I. Island women: young and middle aged
-
- II. Island men: middle aged
- (Island women: old)
- (Mainland men: old)
-
- III. Island men: young and old
- Mainland women: old
-

Figure 11. Linguistic Change by Sex, Age, and Community

though of the older mainland group. Sharing their reluctance to change are older and younger island men, who have different occupational patterns and who may have stronger identification with island life than women. Again, as previous studies of sex-differentiated language use have noted, we find women occupying a paradoxical position in the process of language change. One group of women is strongly resistant to change, while another group is leading the community movement toward standard forms--both groups of women living in an isolated rural area and occupying similar social positions by conventional measures of social class. From my

121
19
178
562

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Georgetown

136

121
19
178
562
121
562
perspective as a participant in community life, however, the life experiences of these groups of women have been different from each other and from those of men in their groups. Recent anthropological analyses have pointed out that men and women universally occupy different positions within their cultural and social groups (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974; Keenan, 1974). In these analyses, women are seen as outside the male-oriented norms of their social groups. Linguists have long understood that the interaction of language and social life has important consequences for linguistic behavior (see especially Ferguson, 1959 and Hymes, 1967, 1973).

121
562
19
If the two sexes have differentiated social roles within all societies, we must expect certain linguistic consequences to follow from the different life experiences of the two sexes. Men and women will speak differently from each other in every social group, but the ways and extent to which they differ can be expected to vary from social group to social group. Hymes (1973) has observed that inequality among speakers arises because some speakers participate in social situations not available to other speakers. To resolve the paradox of linguistically conservative and innovative women, the social situations open to women in their respective groups must be carefully examined. Focusing on women as members of social groups, we should not be surprised to find them represented at the extremes of linguistic conservatism or innovation, depending on the speech situations open to them as active participants in communal life.

000 them as active participants in communal life.

5.3 Conclusion

121
• 178
193
Language does not change in a vacuum. It changes as part of the life experiences of people who use it. Because language is inherently a shared process, those who use it share in determining the direction of change. The analysis of the linguistic variables presented here has shown that the direction of change in Gullah is all in the direction of the standard variety of English. Within each category, speakers show systematic variation which indicates that the meanings or uses most basic to the original creole variables are last to change toward the standard. The variant fe as pre-infinitival complementizer is retained longest for the introduction of purposive clauses. The pronoun ee is retained longest to distinguish neuter subject from neuter object Ea, a distinction not made by standard it. The static-locative preposition to is retained for indications of spatial notions, while standard at is introduced for expression of temporal and figurative notions never expressed by the creole to. Although individual speakers show shared patterns of variation in their movement toward the standard, they make separate choices about the speed with which they move toward it. (562) Young and middle aged women in one community find it advantageous, probably for job-related reasons, to move faster toward the standard than any other segment of their speech

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

Georgetown

138

121
178
193
562
community. Older women in another community choose to resist change toward the standard longest of any speakers in the study. The social factors of sex, age, community membership, and geographic mobility have been shown to influence the activation of change. Sex is indicated as the most influential of these social factors, but its effect is different in the two social groups examined here.

121
178
193
The pattern of change exhibited in Gullah does not parallel that reflected in the history of English. For standard English, to is the original pre-infinitival complementizing particle and retains this function today. Originally introducing infinitival forms in variation with infinitival verb endings, to later shared this function with other particles such as at, til, and for. Although some of these forms are retained today in certain dialects of English, to has never lost its original complementizing function in the standard dialect. The status of for in this grammatical category for standard English is presently the subject of debate by synchronic and historical linguists; in some analyses it has become a complementizer in the base structure, while in other analyses it has retained its prepositional status throughout the history of English. By way of contrast, the particle fe in Gullah was the original complementizing particle, now being replaced by standard to. In the English pronominal system, the singular personal pronouns were marked for gender throughout the history of

121
178
193 English; the animate pronouns were marked for case as well. The original Gullah personal pronouns, ee and Em, are marked for case but not for gender. As Gullah changes toward the standard, these pronouns are acquiring distinctions for gender, but the genderless form ee is retained longest where it marks an original case distinction for inanimates which English does not make. The preposition to was used to mark static location in some earlier dialects of English, as well as dynamic movement, and is still found in some nonstandard dialects today. In its use as a static-locative preposition in Gullah, to holds the strongest claim for origin as a dialectal variant of English. The pattern of expansion for this grammatical category in Gullah, however, is similar to that for English-related creoles in the Caribbean and argues for a development characteristic of an expanding creole rather than of a dialect of English.

121
193 The basic Gullah variants used for the pronominal and prepositional categories discussed here suggest that the Caribbean creoles and Gullah may have had different histories in important respects. For Gullah, the basic distinction in the personal pronoun system is between the syntactic functions of object and non-object. For the English-related creoles of Jamaican and Guyanese, the basic distinction seems to be between animate and inanimate natural-world classes. In the Gullah prepositional category, to is the variant used for basic locative relationships, while at and by are used

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

Georgetown

140

121
193

in the Caribbean for the same semantic domain. These differences in forms used for fundamental grammatical categories suggest that further inquiry into the origins, as well as comparative studies, of all these English-related creoles might lead to further insights about the common patterns of development for expanding languages.

121
198
193

For the analysis of change in Gullah, aspects of both the dynamic model and the quantitative paradigm have been used and both have led to insights about underlying processes. For a complicated grammatical category like the personal pronoun system, the implicational scale utilized in the dynamic model has shown relationships and directions of change not readily perceived through simple frequency counts of variants used by each speaker. For greater faithfulness to the data, however, and for a clearer picture of the patterns of change than simple 'presence or absence' of creole variants would give, some indication of 'more or less' relationships between variants has been included. For showing important relationships between social factors and the activation of linguistic change, quantitative data on individual speakers, whose social characteristics were well established and readily compared with those of other speakers, have been essential. Both models are inadequate at those points where they insist upon categorical divisions rather than allowing for descriptions of continuous, systematic processes. To accurately and fully reflect the findings of the present

5: Nichols

L-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

Georgetown

141

121 study, the dynamic paradigm must allow for systematic indi-
178 vidual variation in parts of the grammar undergoing change.

193 The quantitative paradigm must allow for more communal
variation than is usually considered to exist within the
boundaries of a single speech community. Both these models
have moved us closer to a conceptualization of language as
a process experienced by those who speak it.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

10

759
753
757 usually a work accomplished over a seventy-year span.
Discarding dysfunctional potions and retaining those which
work, these practitioners claim their greatest skill is
that of memory. An oral people, who rely heavily on the
remembered word, practitioners claim that they are simply
extraordinarily adept in this process. This ability en-
ables them to recall those remedies which were of proven
effectiveness in similar cases.

759 It is difficult to accurately gauge how effective this
practice has been. Nevertheless one measure comes through
examining the health habits of islanders. First the is-
[759] lander would try the family remedy for an illness, if this
does not work medical doctors are consulted, if the illness
persists then the hands practitioners are sought. The
• [178] continued existence of these practices on the islands
suggests that these latter practices are effective.

759

Hand Practitioners - What They Can Do

Practitioners are regarded as having the ability to
perform effectively in the following areas:

1. Heal the physically sick.
2. Bring and change the luck element.
3. Change the habits or doings of wayward people.
4. Unite man and woman in pleasant relationships.
5. Protect the body from harm.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

20

362

There are also those units which are adequately furnished, and contain inside plumbing facilities. These homes tend to be new or recently improved. Built during the 1950's, more of the middle age islanders live in houses of this type.

Some sections contain new or recently built homes; these are more rarely seen and tend to be occupied by islanders in their late twenties and thirties who have been employed at an adequate wage over a period of years.

A SUBSUMATION STATEMENT

177
178 The roots of exploitation are deep on the Sea Islands. That information and these program services which would help ease the yokes of oppression are but slowly being metered into the community. In the mist of this oppression, the islanders continue to show spirited strength in maintaining traditional family patterns and the unique customs. They are not diving foolishly into imitation of the suburban elements to which they are gaining greater exposure. Certainly features of the suburban life style are and will continue to be adopted into native family patterns. But these elements will be added with modification. It is too early to speculate on the forms these modifications will take. However, it is rather certain that those elements of suburbanization which would drastically effect the traditional functioning and design of island families-if, ventured into

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

21

177
178 at all, will, in coming, have to be made consistent with
and have minimal impact on the family as it now exists.

178 No doubt, the continued existence of the Sea Islands
as an exclusively Black community will be difficult to
retain. The extent to which the Sea Islands retain their
unique Black character will hinge on the economic resource-
fulness of the younger islanders and on whether those who
have left are willing to return and reclaim their Sea
Island heritage.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

27

121
197
[576]
[197] become characteristic of Sea Islanders were a result of early exposure to "cultured" White plantation owners. The conflicting feature of these two notions is evident. Turner's research cleared up much of the confusion relative to the origin of Gullah.¹¹ His report that the dialect is highly reflective of linguistic systems common to West Africa provides a geographical origin of Gullah Blacks.

121
197
174 That the Gullah dialect has features which are identifiable as distinctly West African linguistic habits is consistent with the research which places West Africa as the origin of the Gullah Blacks. Donnan¹² offers the following list as illustrative of the African origin of Sea Islanders:

Gambia to Sierra Leone
Liberia and the Ivory Coast
(Rice and Grain Coasts)
Guinea Coast (Gold Coast to Calabar)
Angola and the Congo

121
174
178 Herakovits, Crum and others propose that the relatively recent arrival of West Africans to the Sea Islands and the isolation of these islands has been conducive to the retention of African cultural elements. Herakovits suggests that the last population of Africans coming directly to the Charleston Sea port was about 1850. Researchers are in agreement that nowhere in the United States

¹¹ Lorenzo Turner, Africanism in the Gullah Dialect (Chicago, 1949).

¹² E. Donnan, The Slave Trade into South Carolina before the Revolution, Am. Hist. Rev. 33: 804-828, 1927-28.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

28

121
174
178
are more distinctly West African patterns encountered as are found among Sea Island communities. It has also been suggested in the dialect research and folklore collections, that as distance from the mainland increases, more distinctly West African cultural traits are encountered. Similarly, older Sea Islanders tend to mirror West African cultural patterns to larger extents and in purer forms than younger islanders. These reports support the notion that the factors of isolation and of recent arrival have operated to enhance the protection and subsequent retention of Africanism among Gullah Blacks to an extent unique in the United States.

THE PROBLEM

121
114
178
The significance of Sea Islanders as a people who because of their unique situation have retained overt manifestations of their West African heritage is clearly noted in the literature. While he argues against the retention position in general, Frazier could not deny the exception of Sea Islanders. He writes:

During the process of adjusting themselves to American civilization, the majority of the Negroes have sloughed off completely the African heritage.¹³

In view of Turner's work (1939) among Sea Islanders, Frazier modifies his position, "African patterns of thought and

¹³Frazier, op. cit., pp. 3-21.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

29

121 behavior could survive only where the Negroes were isolated
114 and where there was sufficient common understanding among
178 them to give significance to African survivals.¹⁴

In contrast to Frazier's assertion of the complete destruction of the African family organization among American blacks. Dubois¹⁵ believed that careful research would reveal traces. While many aspects of the Sea Island experience have been studied, systematic investigations of the African family organization as proposed by Dubois has not been attempted among Sea Islanders. In this regard, Turner warns that Sea Islanders often exhibit African behavioral features only among the intimate circles of the family. However, if the essential role of the family in cultural transmission is understood, then systematic information on Sea Island child rearing may provide clues on the extent of the survival of African elements among Island families. Furthermore, such an investigation may provide a retrospective glimpse at the processes of de-Africanization of the American black family.

121 Parson's collection of Sea Island folklore identifies
178 attitudinal patterns and beliefs which are clearly of West

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ W. E. B. Dubois, The Negro Family (Atlanta: University Press, 1908), p. 21.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

30

121
178 African origin.¹⁶ It seems quite clear that Sea Islanders have (with modifications) retained cultural patterns which are unmistakably West African in origin. However, the extents and directions of cultural adaptation of Sea Islander--as a consequence of the American experience--is open to question. Certainly, Sea Islanders have not assimilated the American ethos to the extent evident among northern urban Blacks, but no doubt the Sea Islands as a cultural entity is in a state of change. In warning that the Gullah dialect may be unintelligible to Blacks outside of that particular linguist community, Dalby¹⁷ indirectly suggests that the assimilation of Gullah Blacks to mainland (U.S.) cultural norms has been slow. It seems that as more U.S. Blacks strive toward greater identification with their African heritage, the assimilation rates and the resulting cultural adaptations evident among Sea Islanders becomes increasingly important as a means of gaining retrospective insights on the processes of de-Africanization.

12
178 The related and important question of the present investigation is whether in addition to the retention of linguistic Africanisms Sea Islanders also retain other

¹⁶ Elsie C. Parson, Folklore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina in Folklore Society (Cambridge, Mass.: 1923).

¹⁷ David Dalby, "Levels of Relationship in the Comparative Study of African Languages," African Language Society (1966), pp. 171-179.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

31

12
• 178 elements of their cultural heritage? On a broader level, Africanisms have been clearly cited in the music and dancing patterns of mainland Blacks. Likewise the gospel music of the Sea Islands is viewed as highly permeated with African cultural entities. In the same vein, the African features of Sea Island religious beliefs and ceremonies are well established. The African features in the dancing patterns of Sea Islanders has been noted also.

12
178
855 The survival of African Cultural traits in the family structuring and in the child rearing habits and beliefs of Sea Islanders has not been carefully researched. Data of this sort is disjointed, and comes primarily as an indirect contribution of the numerous collection of Sea Island folklores. This literature does note some child rearing features which are common to Sea Islanders and to Blacks elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere who are of West African heritage. The following are examples of these commonly held beliefs:

(1845)
(1789)
(1789)
(1751)
(1754)

A child born with a face caul is able to see supernatural forces and is able to see visions of ancestors.

Charms, necklaces, bracelelets have the power to protect against supernatural affliction and to ward off disease.

The hair and nails of people can be used in "conja" to bring harm. Consequently the parent warns the child not to have strangers comb hair or to cut nails. Parent may also instruct child to destroy residue hair and nails.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

32

Babies are passed over the coffin of ancestors during burial rites.

Children born feet first are gifted and able to manipulate binding constraints.

Children may be named according to season of birth, birth order, and of birth date.¹⁸

In a more recent research effort Kiser suggests that grandparents assume a major responsibility in the Sea Island family.¹⁹ This investigation suggests that the role of grandparents was primarily due to: (a) the migration of younger parents to urban cities while leaving behind offsprings to the care and rearing traditions of grandparents, (b) the seasonal employment patterns whereby the parent temporarily leaves the Island in search of jobs on the mainland.

Undoubtedly these factors do act as antecedents, however, the extent to which this behavior is affected by cultural tradition has not been entertained. Hence it is uncertain whether the status accorded elder Sea Islanders and their family roles are primarily related to environmental factors or more so to the survival of West African cultural elements. There is reason to suggest that the functioning of elders in the Sea Island family and

¹⁸ Marakovits and F. S. Dahomey, Life in the Haitian Valley (2 vols.; New York: 1937-1938).

¹⁹ Vernon Kiser, Sea Island to Urban Centers (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932).

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

33

121 particularly of the status accorded are reflective of West
• 178 African family and tribal traditions. Among West African
855 tribes, it is a general rule that elders are charged with
the responsibility of maintaining and teaching the tribe
and family linkage and histories. In this role, elders
act as judges of whether younger parents are rearing chil-
dren in the traditional mold. Sea Island elders are charged
with similar responsibilities. In earlier times, the island
elders were responsible for making and interpreting the
Black law. Disputes between neighbors or families were
settled by indigenous elder councils. Only disputes which
drew the attention of the White world were brought to the
White man's court. The isolation of the Sea Islands often
made the elder councils of each island the primary legal
body. Likewise, the few numbers of Whites inhabiting the
islands supported the functioning of the elder councils.

623 Although their functions have been limited, the elder
888 Sea Island councils have been retained to date. The extent
178 to which the high status accorded elders in the Sea Island
121 household has changed, as a consequence of assimilation can
[177] only be postulated. Similarly, the literature offers few
clear statements on commonality of roles and of attitudes
toward elders found among Sea Island and West African
121 parents. Finally, there are few statements comparing Sea
855 Island and West African child rearing practices.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

34

121
855
● 178
Consequently, as more Black parents seek knowledge of their West African heritage and strive to rear their children in an African framework, the potential contribution of Sea Island child rearing research is evident.

181
121
[621]
The Sea Islander is known in contemporary Black folklore as funny talking and quick to fight. The other view is that the Sea Islander is extremely religious and quick to pray. Perhaps the single most recurring report is of the cultural cohesion of Sea Island communities. It is this cohesiveness which makes Sea Islanders a unique source for research on discipline behavior.

121
621
861
Certainly the relative isolation of Sea Island communities adds to the possibility that its inhabitants would have similar life histories, beliefs and attitudes. These factors have been shown to act as correlates of discipline behavior. The cohesiveness of the Sea Island communities suggest that the Islanders may have similar predispositions toward discipline. Consequently, the Gullah people are a unique source of data of the effects of antecedent conditions on discipline behavior.

121
In the continued absence of systematic data on Sea Island family systems, it may be difficult for significant numbers of Black parents to develop clear conceptions of child rearing within a West African heritage. Hence, before undue emphasis is placed on direct comparisons of West

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

35

121 African and the child rearing practices of Black American
parents a clear conception of Sea Island child rearing be-
liefs and practices may be an essential prerequisite.
Until this prerequisite research is completed, projected
relationships between Sea Island and West African child
rearing must be viewed as merely conjecture. The intent
of this investigation is to outline the child rearing dis-
cipline habits of Sea Islanders.

THE SEA ISLAND FAMILY

121 Because of their lower socio-economic status the use
861 of physical punishment manifested in parental discipline
may be commonly reported by Sea Island parents. However
the factors of isolation and clearly defined social pat-
terns may negate that of socio-economic status, and have
the effect of diminishing the use of physical punishment.
Or these factors may have the opposite influence of in-
creasing the use of physical punishment.

121 The relatively small living space of Sea Island house-
592 holds coupled with a high proportion of extended family
861 situations could produce a high use of physical punishment
in discipline. Similarly the low educational attainment
levels and occupational status would suggest high use of
physical punishment among Sea Island parents. That whipping
as a form of discipline commonly found among West African
peoples would be also common to Sea Island parents is

121
592
861

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

36

121
128
861

consistent with the postulation that Gullahs have maintained West African cultural traits.

121
861

At present the extent to which these relationships will hold for Sea Island parents can only be postulated. There exists in the literature few clear statements describing the rearing practices and beliefs of Gullah Blacks. Neither is it clear how these rearing practices and attitudes have been formed or modified as a consequence of time, isolation, and/or as a result of the American experience. Likewise the extents to which the discipline practices and beliefs of Sea Islanders is commonly held across generations can only be postulated. It is not clear whether younger islanders hold attitudes toward discipline which mirror the views of older islanders, or if there is a trend toward more attunement to the rearing practices and discipline methods commonly found among urbanized youths. Neither is the literature clear on the discipline attitudes and practices of island parents in comparison to their elders. The intent of the present investigation is to provide some indication of the discipline practices and beliefs of Gullah Blacks, and to provide a historical perspective of these practices and beliefs and to thereby tentatively assess the extent and direction of change.

121

PURPOSES OF THE RESEARCH

This research investigation has four primary aims:

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

52

861 The elder Sea Islanders are active disciplinarians.
887 Because of their roles as community disciplinarians coupled with the large number of households in which elders are primarily responsible for disciplining, elders will provide opportunity to assess the effect of age on disciplining

(888) pattern. Because of the status positions elders hold in Sea Island communities and because of the isolation factor, it can be anticipated that physical discipline would be found to be particularly prominent. Elder Sea Islanders may also report rather unique disciplining techniques which are either in present use, or which have become extinct. This possibility exists because the isolation of the Sea Island supports the retention of West African cultural patterns.

121 Some islands are more inaccessible than others. A
361 measure of the effect of isolation on discipline patterns
861 and techniques will be obtained through cross island comparisons. It is anticipated that there will be a linear relationship between degree of isolation and use of physical discipline.

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

72

592
184
857
861
stoves would come to a halt if wood was not cut in time for meals to be prepared. On the near islands with household supplied with only gas stoves or with both, the child's negligence would not have such dire consequences. In view of this it is easy to see how the chores of children on the far islands would be a more serious matter, and why such households tend to operate on an everytime reaction ratio.

(593) In contrast, parents on the near islands can more afford the gift of tolerance toward neglected chores, and to react to disobedience on a sometime basis.

561
593
178
861
592
Differences across the generations were much more frequent than across island and sex. The element which underly much of the differences was "en ma dae" references of parents and elder parents. The way this works is that each parent tries to rear children like they were reared. The demands of the environment in which grandparents were reared differ from the household patterns under which parents were reared. The main differences other than that of exposure were in labor habits. Grandparents were reared in farming households. Consequently as children, the grandparents were up before day-break and actively engaged in burdensome farm labor. In these farming households the tasks and responsibilities of children were even more clearly defined than they are today or in the childhood of the present parent generation. Similarly the consequences

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

73

561
593
198
861
592

of not completing tasks were harsh because chores were meaningful to the household. It is reference to this agrarian life and the demands for the obedience of children upon which grandparents draw. That the generation of parents now share significantly different childhood references than their parents merely illustrates the component of change in the agricultural habits on the islands. In agreement with this, parents reared in more distant households, where the farm habit is comparatively more active tend to mirror the views of the preceding generation. A similar positive relationship between exposure to the farming habit and the cohesiveness of discipline behavior across the two generations exist on the near islands. The generational differences found in this study can certainly be attributed to the farming versus non-farming pattern. This rationale was expressed vividly by Grand Flower, who at 78 years sees big differences in the rearing habits of her day and those of today. "Billie, let ma tell ya son, we haad no timb fer fooln. Ven d cock taak en bernean we up wete de fas cro. I go ta git d waata en me sista she gix d wod. Wey be fa d life ob dae comin we haad d bakfaz redi. Abta we done wete d poz en plata wen goin ta d fiel. Dey we waak puen sed en d grun or piken en pulen dat wat don redi, we dey til d timb com n fer fix d supa den bak ta dat huse we goin. We gix d mel fer d men fak, den we carie it ta d fiel we

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

74

561 sta en d fiel til d lite nea goin. Billie, ma un I tel ya
593 dey ne timb fer d chilln te b disobedient."

178 Today's children are not reared in the farm habit.

861 Few of the parents have had long exposure to the pat-
592 terns in which the elders were reared. It is consequently
the differences in exposure and work habits which underly
changes in the generational views of Gullah parents. The
significance of differences in the discipline view of the
two generations illustrates not only that the "an ma dae"
reflections of parent and elder parent differ, but it is
also a measure of the direction of change. Grandparents
were the most frequent to respondent "ma paren use beeth
everytime," while parents and children said often and
sometimes more frequently. As a matter of fact, twice
as many parents cited they were punished sometime than did
elders. The direction of change between the generations
is clearly that in each subsequent generation parents are
less apt or as quick to punish the child.

861 Still another point to be considered in looking at
562 the relative tolerance of the female parent is that of role
[578] differences. Males consistently cited fighting as one of
the chief reasons for being disciplined. On the other hand
not getting the chores done was a prime reason for discipli-
[462] nary girls. This is explained in that males had few
household responsibilities and were not disciplined for

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

73

861
562
[462] "undone" house chores while girls were. Upkeep of the house was clearly the female role. When you also consider that females more frequently reported that they were disciplined on an everytime ratio, role differences are again indicated.

It must be clearly understood that the difference in part may be attributable to the greater likelihood that the social behavior of female children would be committed in or close to the house, than would be the case for males. This suggests that the female asocial acts could be more readily noticed. In part, parents and elders in particular may just be more lenient with male children. Certainly the "man chill" attitude is prevalent here. Since females outnumber males, a premium is placed on male children. Among island parents, tolerant attitudes toward males may also be a unique cultural reflection of an African habit.

184
86 In summation, there were few areas in which significant differences exist across the islands. Islanders are quite agreed in their discipline attitudes. Much of the preceding discussion must be seen in the perspective of broader level homogeneity across the five islands. The most

[178] noticeable implication is that the isolation of the Sea Islands has to a large extent protected the cultural cohesiveness of the island community. Notions of the broad [177] scale influence of the mainland elements on island

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

77

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

592
178
177
464
177
861
The Sea Island family is a cohesive unit. Many of the tested generational relationships were significant. These differences between generations were primarily attributed to effect of changing economic patterns, and rates of exposure to mainland patterns. The island work force are now engaged primarily in 9-5 work patterns. The pattern takes this force into job situations in metropolitan Charleston. While the island men tend to work in clusters in the different industries in the region, women are heavily engaged in domestic service work. The projected results are that women because of the nature of their employment were much more exposed and consequently influenced by the tolerant discipline habits of Whites and mainlanders. In contrast, the clustering work habits of males, in which members of families are employed by the same employer has operated to negate the influence of the new work pattern on male parents. The more demanding work requirements which accompanies the maintenance of a farm habit was also discussed. It was said that the farm habit upon which the elder islanders base their discipline references was unknown to

861
178
561
593

861
198
561
593

the island children. The parents themselves have been away from this habit for nearly as many years as they were engaged in it. Consequently, the stern disciplinary demands of the farm habit was not being transferred to this generation of young islanders. In this light, the childhood histories of the elder parents was discussed. It was seen how the harsh work habits required in farming families demanded the obedient behavior of children. Under the burden of farm labor, parents were less tolerant of disobedience than parents are today. The reason given was again differences in occupation. It was also said that parents living in isolated communities were apt to discipline children more quickly than parents who have jobs, because they spend time with their children. For the farming parents, the fatigue element was said to diminish their tolerance level, and that isolated households operate in an everytime reaction ratio. These religious beliefs were introduced as elements which influence frequency and methods of discipline. Gullah Island parents, in this vain, strived to rear children under, and by guidance of the Bible. In discussing the sex role differences, parents tend to more rigidly enforce discipline on female children. This relationship was explained along two lines. The first was the status that the male child has on the islands. Here a dominance of females places a premium upon male children.

861
184

771
861

562
861

6: Smith

I,Y-5

(no date) 1989

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

79

562
86
• [178] The notion that this attitude may be a reflection of an African habit was briefly mentioned. Because females tend to commit asocial acts within the family gap, this was offered in explanation of sex differences in disciplining.

(578) Fighting was considered outside the female role, but a common behavior of males. The reason for fighting as a

(177) more frequent behavior of males on James Island was explained in terms of the greater exposure of near islanders to mainland patterns.

197
177

[191]

178
592
855
887

197
(197)

1.0. Focus of this study

121
197

193 according to each category and stage of acquisition.

3.1. The Nominative Case Pronouns

The data revealed three variants marking the third person masculine nominative case: /ɪə/, /i/, and /hi/.

193 The appearance of three forms is one indication that the
198 Creole is alive but in a state of flux and development.

While neither of these charts represents any one speaker's acquisition of English pronouns, Table 3.4, showing individual variation, indicates that there are stages of language acquisition during which a speaker will produce some forms from the basilect, some from the mesolect, and others from the acrolect until the Creole form is eliminated from the lexicon.

193 The data in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 display the variability of current usage. They indicate that from a total quantitative count of 165 /i/ the unaspirated form of the third person masculine nominative pronoun is chosen 77.6% of the time. While /i/ co-varies with /ɪə/ and /hi/, both polar forms with fewer occurrences than /i/, the English form /hi/ occurs more frequently than /ɪə/. The English form has a frequency of occurrence of 18.8% while /ɪə/ has a frequency value of only 3.6%. This finding suggests that there is variation in the masculine nominative category. But /i/, the form making

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

GULLAH

17

114
538
(197) neither Daddy Jack's personality nor dialect ever approximated the appeal and charm of Uncle Remus. Of this dialect Harris remarks in his Introduction: "It is the negro dialect in its most primitive state—the 'Gullah' talk of some of the negroes on the Sea Islands, being merely a confused and untranslatable mixture of English and African words."

(197) The most notable early success in Gullah was won by Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., of Georgia, in *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast*, 1888. Colonel Jones, a careful lawyer, handled the dialect correctly, and recorded with great exactness and without embellishment the stories as they were told him on the plantation." His collection, like that of Mrs. Christensen, contains the earlier analogs of many of the Uncle Remus stories.

538
191
178 How directly and immediately these Georgia and South Carolina coast tales are derived from African originals may be gathered from Mrs. Christensen's description of her collection as "comprised of verbatim reports from numerous sable story-tellers of the Sea-Islands, some of whose ancestors, two generations back, brought parts of the legends from African forests."

114
538 During the decades following the work of Harris, Page, Jones, and Mrs. Christensen, the short-story of local color and the regional genre sketch became widely prevalent,

(197)
(178) "Mr. Gonzales authoritatively says of his work: "One familiar with Negro speech recognizes that these tales are recorded as they fell from Negro lips, and as such they must be regarded, as far as they go, as the most authentic record of Negro myths on the continent—probably the originals of many of the 'Uncle Remus' stories, for the slaves first came from Africa to the coast, bringing with them their myths and legends which gradually infiltrated into the hinterland." *The Black Border*, Foreword, p. 16.

(567) "See her Preface, XII, XIII. Her informant gives the following account of the source of his stories, (which will likewise serve as a sample of Mrs. Christensen's Gullah dialect): "But I was gwine to tell you 'bout my of gran'daddy. I ofting yearly him tell how 'e was bring ober from Africa in a ship when 'e was a boy. De white man let' de ship behin' and gone asho' in a small boat; an' when dey meet up wid my gran'daddy an' a whole parcel more, young boys like, all from de same village, dey hire dem wid piece oh red flannel an' ting for so long wid dem. But when dey git dem on bo'd de ship dey bring dem ober to dis country an' sell dem for slaves. Dey bring my gran'daddy to Charleston an' ol' Marse Heywood buy um. When I was a small kittle boy 'e ben berry ol', ten ol' for work, an' I use for hab it for my tank for min' um. So 'e tell me heap o' dese story, ef I only could 'member um, dat 'e use to yearly way ober in Africa." Pages 4, 5.

533 mic, plaintive and beautiful. And sometimes the words
themselves, at least the leading phrases, possess a naive
appeal and essential poetic power.

533 Here are some of the most characteristic:
534

See God's Angel comin' down
To see Gawd's bleedin' Lam'.

Dark cloud risin', it looks like rain,
The sun drawin' water from Emanuel's veins,
(Wheel, wheel, wheel, O wheel my Lord.)

I want to die easy when I die.

Looka how dey done muh Lawd;
(Never spoke a mumblin' word,
Mumblin' word.)

I ain't gwine grief muh Lawd no mo'.

Oh de blood done sign mah name.

When I git in heben in my elbow chair,
Then I will rock like angel rock,
(T'ank Gawd I git obuh Jerdan.)

Jesus, when dis whole worl' on fire.

O Death, ain't you gots no shame?

I know moon-rise, I know star-rise,
Lay dis body down.

I walk in de moonlight, I walk in de starlight,
To lay dis body down.

I'll walk in de grave-yard, I'll walk through de
grave-yard,

To lay dis body down.

I'll lie in de grave and stretch out my arms;
Lay dis body down.

I go to judgment in de evenin' of de day,
When I lay dis body down;

And my soul and your soul will meet in de day
When I lay dis body down.

533 In particular, the low-country spirituals have been for-
tunate in having two distinctly preservative influences
exerted on them. The first is the Charleston Society for
the Preservation of Spirituals, an organization composed
of the leading men and women of Charleston, all of whom

533
178
814 belong in the plantation tradition. They have studied the spirituals long and carefully at first hand, have learned them orally from groups of Negro plantation singers, and sing them seriously, feelingly, and sympathetically. Students of Negro music who know the facts are unanimous in the opinion that their rendition is accurate, dignified, and artistic."

533
178
517 The second influence came from a movement to get the Negroes themselves to see the racial importance and native worth of the spirituals and hence to continue to sing them, instead of discarding them as something vaguely to be ashamed of, in favor of printed collections of the white race.

(871) This influence has been particularly effective on St. Helena Island, through the instrumentality of the Penn Normal, Industrial and Agricultural School, which has exerted an extensive influence on the large Negro population of that island." In regard to the spirituals, the most important result, next to the continued singing of the spirituals by the island Negroes, is the recent publication of the words and music of 113 of the finest low-country spirituals."

533 This is the work of N. G. J. Ballanta, himself a Negro from Sierra Leone. Possessing as he does both musical scholarship and a native African background, he is unusu-

(177) "Following are two interesting opinions on the subject of the white people's singing of spirituals. The latter opinion is the more accurate: "Carl Van Vechten writing in *Vanity Fair* about these songs declared it as his opinion that white singers cannot sing them, and that women, with few exceptions, should not attempt to sing them at all. . . . I agree that white singers are, naturally, prone to go to either of two extremes: to attempt to render a Spiritual as though it were a Brahmin's song, or to assume a 'Negro unctuousness' that is obviously false, and painfully so. I think white singers, concert singers, can sing Spirituals—if they feel them." Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, pp. 23, 29.

Compare the remark of a Negro woman quoted by Miss McKim (*Slave Songs of the United States*, XXIII) concerning how a spiritual should be sung: "It can't be sung without a full heart and a troubled spirit."

(162) "St. Helena has a population of approximately 6,000 Negroes and 60 white people. The Penn School, founded during the War Between the States, was the first school for Negroes in the South supported by Northern funds. It has been brought to a high degree of efficiency by Miss Rosa B. Cooley, who went there in 1903. It dominates the island settlement and has had a tremendous influence upon it, so much so that the St. Helena Negroes are considerably above their racial average in most ways.

"St. Helena Island Spirituals, G. Schirmer, Inc., 1923.

533 ally well equipped to deal authoritatively with Negro spirituals."

It is interesting to note that he traces the musical form of the spirituals directly back to African sources. "It is true," he says, "that in a great many instances one may meet with spirituals which actually are arrangements of strains of Hymn tunes, and especially so is this the case with present-day religious productions of the Negro; but it is also true that although there are evidences of the effect of the environment of the American Negro, yet these evidences are overbalanced by others which go to prove the African origin of these Negro Spirituals. . . .

"No one who has been in Africa and has heard the music of the Africans would doubt the sincerity of the statement that the characteristics of the music of the American Negro could be traced to an African stem."

This seems an accurate statement of the case. It is much nearer the facts than the oft-quoted opinion of Booker T. Washington, that the spirituals are products of slavery."

They are products of slavery in the same sense though not in the same degree that they are products of Christianity. That is, both Christianity and slavery had a share in their make-up and undoubtedly were factors, but the real basis and structure are African. The part slavery played was to add intensity and poignancy to the native racial pathos and yearning, while Christianity furnished a remarkably appropriate and vivid background of concrete imagery, concepts, characters, and ideas." But back

"Dr. Frank Damrosch wrote of him: "He is undoubtedly doing fine work in arousing an interest in African music. He is, so far as I know, the only one who is competent to do this work." *St. Helena Island Spirituals*, Intro., IV.

"*Ibid.*, Foreword, VI. Compare James Weldon Johnson's somewhat parallel view, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 23-27, and H. E. Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folkways*, G. Schirmer, 1914.

"They glow with the hope that the children of bondage will ultimately pass out of the wilderness of slavery into the land of freedom. In singing of a deliverance which they believed would surely come, with bodies swaying with the enthusiasm born of a common experience and of a common hope, they lost sight for a moment of the auction block, of the separation of mother and child, of sister and brother. . . ." B. Coleridge-Taylor, *Transcriptions of Negro Melodies*, Preface.

"For an excellent expression on this point see Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, Preface, 20, 21. The whole preface is well worth reading. In it, however, and in the Preface to *The Second Book of American Spirituals* as well, there are occasional lapses from either fact or interpretation into stone-throwing. This, for example, from the latter volume, pages 14, 15, in connection with the

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

533 of both Christianity and slavery lie first, the native racial
527 characteristics which were the really creative factors in
114 the spirituals; and second, the particular environment
178 which alone of all possible localities has called them into
being." This combination created them; Christianity
shaped and molded them; slavery lent fervor.

533 As to their sadness, long after the War and Emancipa-
152 tion even to the present day, the same yearning note has
178 persisted in Negro music. As two scholarly authorities
567 have well put it: "Slavery has passed, six decades of lib-
erty for the slave people have signalized the better civili-
zation, and there still remains among the Negroes the
same emotional nature, the same sad, plaintive, beautiful,
rhythmic, sorrow-feeling in their songs." On internal
evidence it is impossible to date the spirituals. Those of
1880-1900 sound like those of 1840-1860.

533 Likewise in the prolific "Blues" and the many songs
152 of jail, chain-gang, prison, and lonesomeness," which are
(522) distinctly modern in composition, there is the same sad
appealing note, with much self-pity. There is also, be-
t said in passing, a good deal of humor, which is the com-
plement, not the opposite, of pathos.

(527) scarcity of spirituals based on the birth or infancy of Christ: "The reason may
be due in part to the fact that the anniversary of the birth of Christ was not, in
the South, in any sense a sacred or religious holiday. Up to within recent years,
at least, it has been celebrated chiefly with gunpowder and whiskey. It has there
been the most secular, even the most profane of all holidays. In slavery times it
was the one day on which the slaves were given a sort of freedom. The liberty of
coming and going was greatly enlarged. On many plantations whiskey was distrib-
uted. The day was one given over to a good time; to singing, dancing and visiting;
to guzzling, gluttony and debauchery. It is possible that it was a conscious part
of the scheme of slavery to make Christmas a day on which the slaves through sheer
excess of sensuous pleasure would forget their bonds."

"With the exception of a few statements here and there, like the following, the im-
portance of environment has usually been overlooked: "If there is anything 'racial'
about the spirituals and the blues, then there should be immediate ability to catch the
intricate rhythm on the part of Negroes from Jamaica, Zanzibar, and Sierra Leone.
Such is not the case, and we must conclude that they are the products of a certain
American environment: The South. They are American folk-songs, built around
Anglo-Saxon religious concepts." George E. Schuyler, "Correspondence," *The Nation*,
July 14, 1926, p. 38.

(113) "Odum and Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, p. 19.

(113) "See the chapters on 'Blues' and 'Songs of Jail, Chain Gang, and Policemen' in
Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workday Songs*, the chapter on 'Blues' in Dorothy
Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, and W. C. Handy, *Blues, An Anthol-
ogy*, A. and C. Boni, N. Y., 1926.

CONCLUSION

•178
538
(533) Of course there is much in the Gullah tradition that has already passed beyond recall, and much that is passing with this generation for lack of suitable recorders. "Hymns, songs, folk-stories, animal-myths, fables, aphorisms and proverbs, wit and humor, it has, and a great mass of unrecorded folk-lore, legend and tradition, preserved in this unstudied dialect like flies in amber; there are, peculiar to it, certain Rabelaisian *contes ridicules*, told in cabins with wild mirth," *histoires satyriques*, and ghastly *legendes macabres*," besides which the uncanny tales of Hoffman are puerile in power to chill, but harder to get at than the things banned by the Great Tabu."

It is all interesting—superstitions, folk-lore, tales, songs, and dialect—and the literature that enshrines the Gullah tradition will always remain a significant chapter in the great book of human life.

000 As an example of the dialect itself there may be quoted

(609)
(83)
(171) "Told to white people (only to men of course) rarely except under the loosening urge of whiskey, on special occasions such as a hunting or fishing expedition. The experience of Mrs. Elsie Clegg Parsons on St. Helena Island in searching for material of this kind is both interesting and illuminating. She says: "The more or less obscene turns occurring now and then in the Bahaman tales are quite lacking in Carolina, whether as a result of natural indifference to the obscene or of greater sophistication, it is somewhat difficult to estimate. In the deliberate suppression of certain tales or 'tonsts', as drinking-verses are called in both the Sea Islands, and the Bahaman, the sophistication is plain enough. 'Some is so evil, I don' like to go t'rough wid 'em,' said one who failed to tell me the many 'lous' he had boasted of knowing. Tale No. 78, 'Man Under the Bed,' a variant of the well-known European tale of 'The Woman and the Friar', is one of the commonest of Bahaman tales. One day I happened to ask Mr. Jack if he knew it. 'Oh, you want dem kin' o' tales too! I could tell you a heap o' dem tales, but I blush fo' you,' he said. 'You must not,' I rejoined, 'for it is my business to take down all kinds of tales, no matter what they are about, and just as they are.' Finally, out of the 'heap o' dem tales', he told me the very tale I had referred to, as well as one other tale of which a variant is familiar on Andros Island, 'The Three Sweet-hearts,' (No. 77). James Murray said that he knew twenty-five or thirty 'man's tales'; but," added he, and too firmly for challenge, 'I wouldn' go t'rough wid 'em.' Artistic story-teller as he was, he would forego part of the point of a story rather than commit the moral impropriety of telling it. 'I leave it dere,' he would say. White story-writers, like Harris or Jones or Christensen, have left it there, too, I infer. Indeed, Mrs. Christensen has told me that, faithful recorder as she was, on this point she had been selective: the stories she found 'vulgar' she had not taken." *Folk-Lore of the Sea-Islands*, Preface, XX, XXI.

A hint of the latent vulgar possibilities is found in the double-entendre riddles Nos. 29, 30, 31, 32 (pp. 156, 157), on which Mrs. Parsons makes no comment.

"One of which Mr. Bennett has himself brilliantly re-created in *Madame Mergot*, The Century Co., 1921.

"Bennett, II, 62.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

viii

Acknowledgments

114
115
533
Camden County, too, has many excellent singers, but proximity to Jacksonville, Florida—as is the case with the section south of Savannah to the Ogeechee River—has not increased the popularity of the old-time music. Outstanding among those who sing in the traditional manner are “Major” Harris, Will Harrell, the Lukes, the Gibbsses, and several other singing families that appear to have inherited the gift. There are hundreds of others listed in the membership book of our Society. Unfortunately it is impracticable to name them all, though their devotion is the only safeguard against oblivion that this music possesses.

533
• 178
199
Formerly the allegiance of the singers to the slave songs was supported by religious fervor and by the authority of the praise-house and the church, but these strongholds are now given over to Europeanized book versions and vapid sacred hymns. Neither possesses the power to stir the blood, and in many churches—even where a vested choir sits in smug self-possession beside the pulpit—the congregation sings the traditional songs when collection time comes around: the deacons know from experience that the old tunes are potent money-getters, while the book songs are not. It is well to recognize, however, that in a materialistic world loyalty needs something more solid to stand on than religious exaltation. For this reason the help of the white friends who have given their moral and financial support to the preservation of the slave music is beyond price. To them this book is gratefully dedicated.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

xvi

An Explanation

533 leading a religious song; a fact which makes it advisable, in writing down the words, to use as few punctuation marks as possible. The effect of an inexhaustible supply of breath is achieved through the simple expedient of the "basers"—as members of the chorus are called—"spelling" the leader, who gets his breath at the end of a narrative line while the chorus sings the response or the next line. In the old days, here, as in Africa, the virtuoso did not exist, and the basers played as important a part in group singing as the one who sang the leading lines. Now, however, there is a tendency to disregard the customary technique, which demands that the basers remain silent until the last word or two of the leader's narrative line is sung. In authentic slave music no nuances are observed,¹³ but the absence of any variation in tone is not conspicuous when alternation between leader and chorus produces changes in volume. When the whole group sings in unison, however, the effect is extremely dull and monotonous.

533
114
178
177 One of the few trustworthy writers on the subject of Negro spirituals, Jeannette Robinson Murphy, could also sing them. It is regrettable that her book *Southern Thoughts for Northern Thinkers* (1904) is out of print. In the section on "The Survival of African Music in America," she tells us: "During my childhood my observations were centered upon a few very old negroes, whose mothers and fathers came directly from Africa, and upon many others whose grandparents were African born, and I early came to the conclusion, based upon negro authority, that the greater part of their music, their methods, their scale, their type of thought, their dancing, their patting of feet, their clapping of hands, their grimaces and pantomime, and their gross superstitions came straight from Africa." Even at this late date, it is possible to find ex-slaves in remote spots on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia who can—if their confidence is won—substantiate practically every one of her conclusions. It cannot be done, however, by sitting peacefully in a library chair or spending a comfortable summer vacation on the campus of a Negro school. Writers from New England who have studied the songs of the Negro, mostly in libraries, are prone to emphasize the importance of book evidence. They do not appear to realize that their conclusions are valueless without work in the field among the children and grandchildren of native Africans—who are our only authorities.

As Carter Woodson truly says, the proof offered by the writers who claim a white origin for the Negro spirituals "would not pass the test of any research depart-

¹³ A Negro quartet that, sings in a staccato fashion, or renders the last verse of a song pianissimo shows clearly that it has taken its cue from the white man.

An Explanation

xvii

523
114
177
178

ment of a real university." Mrs. Murphy goes on to say that "Some of their later songs, it is true, we must technically call 'modified African,' but how far the original song elements have been altered (and usually not for the better) by contact with American life is a question of fact, and can only be settled by a careful comparison of the songs as sung among the natives of Africa and the changed forms in which their modified ones are found today in the South. It must be determined in each case, and cannot be settled by any general theory or formula. . . . The stock is African, the ideas are African, the patting and dancing are all African, and those who study this weird music at short range have no difficulty in recalling the . . . conditions that gave it birth."

533

Mrs. Murphy stresses the fact that the traditional way of singing slave spirituals must be learned in childhood when the voice is flexible, and—if you are to become proficient—you must listen to the older Negroes, preferably ex-slaves. Every characteristic she mentions is duplicated in the singing of the Negroes of the Georgia coast. As in South Carolina, they break every law of musical phrasing and notation, yet there is nothing to be found on the printed page to show how this is done. For instance, a prominent note is embellished with a variety of small notes which used to be called "trimmin's," tones are sung not found in our scale, humming is employed that is not easily transcribed, emphasis is placed—according to our ideas—where it does not belong, and one note is not left until the singer has a firm hold on the next—a method which produces the undulating effect that characterizes the genuine spirituals. The appearance of never taking breath,¹³ already described, is another characteristic that must be observed in singing songs of this type. Unfortunately, the trick of dropping from a high note to a low one on a prolonged one-syllable word is less common than in my youth, but the arbitrary division of a mono-syllable, and the placing of emphasis on the second half, are as popular as they ever were.

In our music, the accents generally fall on the stressed syllables of the spoken word and on the regular beats of the music, but as Natalie Curtis-Burlin tells us in *Negro Folk Songs* "the accents fall most frequently on the short notes and on the naturally unstressed beats, producing what we call 'syncopation' of a very intricate and highly-developed order. The peculiarity of this syncopation is best explained to the layman by drawing attention to the way in which the natural rhythms of the

¹³ As Mrs. Murphy says, the breath should be carried over "from line to line and verse to verse, even at the risk of bursting a blood vessel."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

CHAPTER ONE

Concerning Slave Songs and Their Preservation

533 Where did they come from? Who composed them? How old are they? These are the questions repeatedly asked by Northern guests on hearing the little-known slave songs. But I have searched libraries, North and South, without finding the answers. The reason is simple: no one knows enough about the African side of the songs to write authoritatively concerning it, and their beginnings in this country are so obscure that one man's guess is as good as another's. This lack of knowledge, however, does not prevent guesses—both good and bad—from being made.

533
197
198 The birthplace of the songs is conceded to be the Old South, and they are found nowhere else except where introduced—as in the Bahamas—by the slaves of loyalists from the mainland;¹ but the honor of their creation, as indicated in the first half of their name, Afro-American, goes definitely to the Negro, for they represent the genius of the early slaves who combined the complicated rhythms of Africa with the more highly developed melodies of the Colonial planters.

To be sure, native Africans studying music in this country question the justice of the share of credit allotted them by the hyphen, for they consider the songs to be preponderantly Negro. Nordics are no better satisfied. They as firmly believe that the slave composers were nothing more than plagiarists—and in the way of phrase-lifting, they were. These alien people were under the necessity of learning a foreign language in a few months, but it is a recognized fact that no white man can turn a phrase with the same pithy economy as the Negro, and none has ever composed—to my knowledge—a successful imitation of a Negro song. What neither claimant appears to recognize is this: without the remarkable musical gift and deeply religious nature of the African slave, there would have been no soul-stirring sacred songs. On the other hand, without the contact with Western music and the inspiration provided by the Bible—at the hands of the slave-owners—these selfsame songs might
(175) ¹In all likelihood they were also carried to Liberia in 1820 by the transplanted American slaves.

123
533 remembered their old songs and could be induced to sing for me if I would make it worth their while. This was in 1915, and, ever since, I have been doing just that: making it worth their while. During the bleak winters of the depression, some of the singers literally sang for their supper—which, they thankfully observed, the Lord had provided. In 1929 it was found expedient to put a cabin at my "Corner," and ever since overflow audiences from the resort hotel at Sea Island have worn a path to its door.

861
533 All of which goes to prove that this exotic music need not be given up for lost so long as a few singers live to teach the traditional technique (Illustration 13).^A To the younger generation—on whom its survival depends. Long ago the need of training the children seemed to me particularly urgent, and six groups in two counties were taught by older singers, until hard times put an end to the undertaking. In the last few years the value of such instruction has been proved in the help the young people have given their groups at the "sings" on St. Simon's. (Illustration 25).^B Where death has thinned the ranks of the older singers, the younger ones have filled the gaps with distinction.

533
199
178 But genuine Negro music is confronted by a real menace in the scornful attitude of those Negro school-teachers¹⁰ who do their utmost to discredit and uproot every trace of it. Instead of being inordinately proud of their race's contribution to the music of the world, as they have every right to be, too many of them treat it like a family skeleton. In the schoolroom, even in sections where spirituals may be said to be indigenous, they are suppressed, and the supposedly "more artistic" Europeanized book versions are laboriously learned. This misplaced zeal even follows the pupils into the school yard. Such musically commonplace English game songs as "The Farmer Takes a Wife"—although I admit the action is picturesque—are substituted for such joyous Afro-American melodies as "Go roun' the Border, Susie"—for all the world like carrying synthetic coals to Newcastle! It must be remembered, however, that the teachers cannot be blamed for the harm they do the musical taste of their pupils: they only reflect the type of training imposed upon the race since 1861. No one quarrels with any system of education that helps the Negro to hold his own in a white man's country; but when a system is employed which causes him to despise everything African, and to throw away his birthright at a time when

¹⁰ At Hampton Institute, when I protested at the way the old tunes were altered, a music instructor loftily informed me: "When they are wrong, of course they must be changed."

A. [For Illustration 13, see Category 114, plate facing p. 81.--Analysis]

B. [For Illustration 25, see Category 533, plate facing p. 145.--Analysis]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

Concerning Slave Songs and Their Preservation

11

177
• 178 many authorities encourage him to believe in its value, it is evident that such a system stands in need of drastic revision.

In an address delivered in Philadelphia some years ago, Carter Woodson, the Negro historian, frankly said that the average American Negro is the victim of traditional teaching in Northern white schools; that his people are becoming a race of imitators; that not until they study their African background, react to it, and interpret it, can they hope to come into their own. A lifetime of contact with ex-slaves and their descendants, and of observation of the deleterious effects of the present-day system of education upon the younger Negroes, has convinced me that Woodson's arraignment is entirely merited. America has splendid material—and see what we do with it! Slavery of the body is bad, but I am positive that mental slavery does more harm to the race than physical bondage ever did.¹¹

If ignorance of the history, dialects, art, music and literature of Africa—due probably to the ignorance of the educators themselves—can be remedied, and these educators can be made to appreciate the value of African art and music, then undoubtedly the race can once more contribute its quota to the art of the world. But such a right-about-face cannot take place until the Negro gets rid of the idea that all culture is vested in the white man's viewpoint. From the fact that Broadway features Negro actors, dancers, and musicians as never before, and that the producers of a Negro opera attempted to teach the Harlem blacks to speak and sing like their primitive Southern cousins, it is clear that this is no time for the race to be disdainful of its African heritage. In 1934, the most exacting New York critics applauded Kykukor, the West African dance-drama, and made it the talk of the town—although some of us deplored its Europeanized singing. At about the same time, exhibitions of primitive African art were accorded such recognition as to fill the classicists with definite alarm.

Such is the precarious position in which the slave music finds itself today. While it is not hopeless, it is none too encouraging. Jaunts up and down the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, to the out islands of the Bahamas, and to Haiti, in search of African art survivals of all kinds give proof that they still exist, but the white man's drive against illiteracy is enabling the Negro school-teachers to make a drive, at the same time, against all things African.

000 According to Reuben Tolakele Caluza, the same situation exists in Africa,

¹¹ J. A. Tillinghast says, in *The Negro in Africa and America*, that American slavery, in effect, was a vast school, in which all the pecuniary profits went to the teachers.

Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands

000 where records of London music-hall ditties are preferred to the folksongs of the native. It is a discouraging sign of the times to find quantities of sentimentalized spirituals listed in foreign record catalogues side by side with songs of African natives. It does seem as though we have come to a pretty pass when the Negro, who sings a spiritual as only a Negro can, is determined to sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee," and the white man, who sings a Brahms song to perfection, is equally determined to sing "Roll, Jordan, Roll." What a contrary world we live in!

533
178 But a clue to the solution of the problem is found in the fact that the rural Negro has always taken his cue from the white folks at the "Big House." If they favor and enjoy the slave songs, it may be that he is not so far wrong after all, in cherishing his heritage in the face of jeers from the "style" leaders of his community. Such being the case, the future of the old-time music evidently rests in the hands of the landed gentry of the South. Their influence is quite as potent as it was in the days "befo' de wa'," and in view of this fact and the known conservatism of the majority of the middle-aged rural Negroes, the prestige that plantation owners can give means the difference between extinction and conservation.

In consequence, I never lose an opportunity to beg the coöperation of those who are in a position to lend an encouraging hand. There is no need to do more than allow the Negroes to provide entertainment in the manner that was usual on many ante-bellum estates. The justification for such a positive statement is found in the efficacy of this very method on the coast of Georgia. No one has better reason than I to know what the interest of certain plantation owners has meant in the preservation of Negro music. For years the "Big Boss" of Sapelo Island¹² did much to increase its prestige. At Hofwyl Plantation, the devotion of the owners to the religious slave songs has made their neighborhood a veritable oasis of Afro-American music; and at The Ridge, "Miss Sis,"¹³ as she was affectionately called, did splendid work in encouraging the survival of the ring-shout—although she characteristically disclaimed any credit. In addition, the applause of Northern audiences at Sea Island and at the Cabin has produced a striking change in the attitude of our Negroes toward their music.

535 If you are interested in African survivals and have a Negro community on or near your property, all you need do (provided you live in a remote district and are generous with your silver) is to let it be known that you wish to see such solo

¹² The late Howard E. Coffin.

¹³ Mrs. W. E. Clifton

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

Concerning Slave Songs and Their Preservation

19

000

In a series of articles on Gold-Coast music in the *London Musical Times* (1932), Mr. Ward says:

Africans are at least as musical as any race in Europe, possibly more musical than any. . . . Their harmony is as far developed as European harmony in the sixteenth century; it sounds very different, but it is not inferior. And in rhythm Africa is two centuries ahead of Europe. Their music is the most alive of any of their arts, and shows no sign of dying; new songs are constantly appearing, and quickly spread over the country. Whether it will survive the attack of bad Western music and the sapping of tribal institutions and religion, with which it is intimately connected, remains to be seen; ultimately music is threatened by the same dangers as other African arts, though it seems likely to resist more strongly. But if it could learn from Europe modern developments in form and harmony, African music should grow into an art as magnificent as any that the world has yet seen.

533
191

The relationship of our slave music to that of the African Negro is such that what is said of one applies in the main to the other. This fact gives particular weight to the authoritative words of Mr. Ward.

533
197

It seems to me that the ultimate fate of this music rests with the owners of Southern plantations and with those who mold public taste through radio programs. Within the last year, there are indications that up-to-date young Negroes are beginning to appreciate the authentic slave songs; and the increasing popularity of exotic African tones and rhythms among white people leads me to believe that the pendulum of taste is swinging toward the music of Africa and away from the European preponderance of melody and harmony. In this trend lies a ray of hope for the survival of the contribution made by the Afro-American slave.

• 198

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 Georgia
 St. Simon's Island

31

764
[775]
[776]
• [778]
[775]

764
171

481
562
178
[764]

²² Our Southern Indians made holes in the bottom of the pots they put in graves, so that the spirit of the pot could accompany the spirit of the dead man to the other world.

²⁰ *Century*, April, 1891.

²⁰ In the Friends Meeting I attended in my youth, the women sat on the left side of the meeting-house and the men on the right.

342
792
782
[778]
[779]

Another custom, more widespread than is generally known, probably originated in Africa. When a new building is completed it is christened with prayer and song followed by shouting. The afternoon Joe and Clarence finished the Cabin, (Illustration 12), Clarence made a prayer and asked a blessing, Julia put rice in the four corners for good luck, and after a few songs it was considered that the building was auspiciously launched.

342

The addition to the original Cabin was not blessed. It is a curious fact that the roof developed leaks at once, termites got into the floor, and it was necessary to rebuild the whole section. If such bad luck continues, it will look as though the Sapelo idea is not far wrong. There, it is considered most unwise to put on an addition to an old house. "You will lose some member of your family if you do."

353
[123]
[754]

[533]

In the papering of the Cabin, on my own initiative, I took another precaution which has afforded the singers much amusement. The walls of many small cabins are covered with news-print, because the prevailing idea in the old days was that a hag had to read every word before she could work evil on you.²⁰ I used the financial section of *The New York Times* for good measure. In the accompanying illustration (Illustration 14), it can be seen how this original type of wallpaper enhances the picture made by the singers, and separates them from their background. It was made during the closing song—"One a These Days, My Sister"—when Willis was shaking the hand of Bessie in accordance with the usual custom at prayer meeting in a less sophisticated era.

000

342
777

DeZayas, in *African Negro Art*, tells of an exceedingly sensitive devil at Sierra Leone, who requires the utmost respect, and, if not propitiated by liberal offerings of palm wine, rice, and fowl, will certainly bring trouble to those invoking his intervention. Every time he is consulted, rice flour must first be offered. However, our Negroes disclaim any knowledge of their reason for using rice at a housewarming, except to bring good luck.

782
763

Chance often enables us to discover new examples of the general belief in occult forces. Such was the case when a friend and I heard a cracking report in my empty kitchen. On investigation we found that a glass bowl had broken in half. The next day Julia told me it is a sure sign that some member of your family is going

[770]

²⁰ A similar notion is held in Nassau according to M. Cavel in "Items of Folk-Lore from Bahama Negroes," in Vol. 17 of the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*. "If you think you are being hagged, take a pint of benne seed . . . and guinea corn . . . spill it all in tie four corners of your house; that will catch the hag as she cannot leave the house before she has picked up all the seeds, one by one, during the night."

A, [For Illustration 12, see Category 342, plate facing p. 80--Analyst]

B, [For Illustration 14, see Category 353, plate facing p. 86--Analyst]

African Survivals on the Coast of Georgia

43

125
567
(159) gun. Mrs. Arnold, who was the daughter of Captain Stevens, of Frederica, told me how her father's slave, Old Grace, had been captured in a "goober patch" in Africa. Old Grace and some members of her tribe had made a stealthy night raid on the stockaded garden of a neighboring village. Although Mrs. Arnold told me the story over twenty-five years ago, I can still see Old Grace trying to climb the fence when she and her companions were discovered.

567
795
159
175 We are supposed to dig our graves with our teeth, and inferentially Grace's appetite for peanuts was her undoing, but no grave was dug for her, if the story of her end is true. Mrs. Stevens always cautioned her children to keep away from Old Grace's cabin, for she boasted that she had eaten pickaninnies in her native land, and "the meat was sweet." She was also reputed to be a hag and many a "marsh tacky"—found in the morning with a matted, tangled mane—was she supposed to have ridden. When the Federal forces—followed by an iniquitous carpet-bagger⁴⁹—took over St. Simon's, Captain Stevens, although a Dane and a non-combatant, was sent to Fort Delaware, where he died. His widow and children were sent to Savannah. After the war was over, they returned to Frederica and found that Old Grace had disappeared. No one would talk about her, but the story got around that her own people had grown tired of her wicked ways, and had staked her out at low tide in one of the salt-water creeks. If the water rose above her head, that was an act of God, and was no concern of those who did the deed. In Miss Kingsley's *Travels in West Africa*, I have lately found that this mode of drowning was one of the popular methods of disposing of African witches.⁵⁰

(283)
(171)
• 178 Besides survivals of language, customs, and beliefs, we have survivals of particular skills. Such useful ones as carrying unwieldy bundles on the head, making canoes and mortars by hollowing out logs, weaving baskets—particularly the flat type used for fanning rice—are a commonplace in the South, and may not on this account

⁴⁹ His name was Eaton, and he is said to have come from Maine. He purported to be a minister and insisted on remarrying the Negroes at twenty dollars a pair. Although the price was high, they were enabled, through his assistance, to occupy the homes of the refugee planters. Before Mrs. Stevens was out of her house the Negroes came in and made their choice of rooms—generally a family to a room. When the Postells returned to Kelvin Grove Plantation after the war there were ten Negro families in their house. Not a shutter was on it. Every one had been taken down to make corn bins in the basement, and every pane of glass had been shattered by the gun-boats. Can we wonder that the Southerners called us "Damyankees"?

⁵⁰ Miss Kingsley believed that the black man recognized "in a dull sort of way" that witchcraft meant the same thing as poison. She tells that he very generally regarded "the best remedy for witching as being a brisk purgative and emetic."

- 178 be recognized as African. However, the aesthetic taste of the race, which expressed itself in Africa in ceremonial dances, in song, and in carvings, had less opportunity for expression in the utilitarian lives led by the slaves.

461 Olmstead reports that "it is interesting to find in what ways the creative instinct continued to manifest itself," and goes on to quote a prominent Virginia planter as saying that his Negroes "never worked so hard as to tire themselves—always were lively and ready for a frolic at night." As in Africa, every possible piece of work was done to song; and it probably did not take the slave-owners long to discover that the output was greater when leaders with a gift for rhythm were appointed to regulate the work of gangs of laborers. Nor is it surprising that the slaves were expert blacksmiths, when it is remembered that Africa since time immemorial has worked in iron. Her deposits were so rich and so near the surface that comparatively simple methods were required to make the ore available. On this account certain tribes have always been skilled in iron-work, and the reason for the excellence of the famous grilles, balconies, and railings made by the slaves of New Orleans is obvious.

567 George D. Lowe, editor of the *Baxley Banner*, tells of a Georgia slave who could take a blackgum log and cut from it a perfect screw for the old-type cotton press, and also cut the opposite thread for the follower block—all this without laying out a line on the log, just using his eye. Mr. Lowe says: "There was another Negro slave owned in Twiggs county who was a famous stairbuilder, and his owner rented him out to men building fine homes as far away as Mississippi. . . . I have heard it said that he built at least one hundred stairways, never using a plan, but producing curved lines that no modern builder has approached in graceful beauty." At Inca-
chee Plantation there is a wrought-iron basket made by a colored blacksmith for holding flaming fat-wood (pine) knots. I am covetous every time I see it. And in the plant of the Brunswick Marine Company, I am told, there are several mechanics trained in the old school who show unusual skill in metal-work.

322 During the last depression, when there was no work for the Negro cabinet-
makers and carpenters, whittling was the inevitable pastime for Willy Rogers, of
333 Darien and Lonnie Davis, of St. Simon's. (Illustrations 20 and 21.) Both made a
746 number of canes which were ornamented with alligators climbing their length.
171 These wood carvings are obviously in line with West African tradition, and indicate
461 that the sculptor's art is only dormant in the race. Given leisure, enough to eat, and
517 greater respect for his own mode of expression, the Negro might again take to the

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

CHAPTER THREE

Afro-American Shout Songs

535. There appears to be a difference of opinion regarding the use of the word
114 "shout" in designating the religious ring-dance, which was enjoyed during planta-
192 tion days after prayer meeting and church service. Formerly writers thought that
the Negro used the word because dancing was so sinful that it was wise to avoid even
the name. But Dr. L. D. Turner has discovered that the Arabic word *Saut* (pronounced
like our word "shout"), in use among the Mohammedans of West Africa, meant to
run and walk around the Kaaba. I believe he has provided the right explanation for
the difference in the meaning of the word, as used by the whites and the blacks, for
I have seen the Negroes do the holy dance around the pulpit in their churches in
such a manner.

535 Shouting appears to be of two types: Along the coast of Georgia and South
Carolina the most popular form is the ring-shout, in which a number of dancers
move counter-clockwise in a circle. (Illustration 22) Occasionally individuals are
seen in church using the same rhythmic shout step. In North Carolina and Virginia,
however, the solo performance is apparently the only form in use, and the ring-
shout seems to be unknown.

535 Those who have traveled in Africa, and have seen native dancing, are con-
vinced that the shout of the American Negro is nothing more than a survival of an
African tribal dance, and that the accompanying chants in their form and melody
are quite as typical of Africa as the dance itself.¹ It is recognized, of course, that the
198 words of the Old Testament have been substituted by the Negro for those of his
(197) native land. When the slaves grew more familiar with the English language, they
evolved the more complicated religious songs that are now popularly called spi-
rituals.

¹ Records Nos. 6 and 10 of the series made in the Belgian Congo by the Denis-Roosevelt expedition are strikingly similar.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

Afro-American Shout Songs

55

796
535
138
535
(23) During ante-bellum days shouting was as much a part of the Sunday afternoon service as the sermon. By 1900, however, the more fashionable Negro preachers felt that this mode of worship could not be correct, since it did not conform to the conventional pattern of the white man's service; they began to frown upon the religious dance as they did upon the use of "Amen" and similar responses by the congregation. Even so, the hold of shouting is tenacious, and it is practiced during the Christmas holidays² to this day. All the country Negroes enjoy it immensely, though many are unwilling to admit that they know how to do it, as they consider the dance old-fashioned. It was years before I was permitted to see the St. Simon's Negroes indulge in this innocent performance. Why they should have been so secretive about such a pastime I cannot understand, unless—because the style of dancing is unlike ours—they were afraid I might laugh at it.

I shall never forget the night at the hall of the Queen of the South Society when I first saw the ring-shout. Hard board benches were an unimportant matter. Little had I suspected, when Margaret took care of my room at the Arnold House years before, that she could outdo the Ouled Nail Dancers, of Biskra—if she wished. As it was, she wiggled her hips shamelessly, held her shoulders stiff—at the same time thrusting them forward—kept her feet flat on the floor, and, with the usual rhythmic heel-tapping, progressed with real style around the circle—goodness knows how. White folks who attempt the step of the true ring-shout find it difficult exercise. Few young Negroes will do it, and the Big Apple, with the stamp of the white man's approval, has recently been more popular. Should shouting ever achieve the same vogue, its life would be prolonged.

It was good fun telling the St. Simon's Negroes—too self-conscious in earlier years to shout—how a professional performer, Tamiris, seen in New York was dancing spirituals. There is a wide gulf between such a professional and Cornelia, but I am certain that the white artist, no matter how skillful, could learn something in the way of form from this colored woman, whose lean fine frame, beaked nose, and keen eyes bespeak her Arab ancestry—on the male side. As for Edith—who, being a Murphy, is temperamental—every now and then she gives a stylized, angular performance as though copying the poses of the figures in Egyptian decorations. The way she holds her arms and hands is perfect. It positively hurts that I have no moving picture of her statuesque, rhythmic pauses, or the pause Gertrude (Illustration

(175)
(529) ²Joe Armstrong tells me that before the War Between the States, "Jubilee time began on Monday before Christmas with a big eat of pork and baked yams."

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

Georgia

St. Simon's Island

86

Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands

533 and over the chant is repeated, the rhythm all-important, always right; the sonorous
535 Old Testament words are just necessary sounds to carry along the melody, and the
sequence of thought is nothing to worry about.

533 The words may be monotonous when read, but are not so when sung: "Adam"
534 is turned into "Ad-u-m," with unusual tones and inflections all through the leading
lines, which show surprising invention. It is self-evident that the song belongs to the
African question-and-answer type, and bears no trace of European influence in its

• [178] form:

Oh Eve where is Ad-u-m?

Oh Eve—Adam in the garden

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Adam in the garden

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Faster: Lord called Adam

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Adam wouldn' answer

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Adam shame'

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Ad-u-m? (Rising inflection)

Pinnin' leaves.

Ad-u-m? (Falling inflection)

Pinnin' leaves.

Where't thou?

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Adam naked

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Ain't y'u shame'?

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

Lord I'm shame'

Pinnin' leaves. (repeat)

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

Baptism

169

795
794 "Wade in the Water," the candidates, each escorted by a church member, followed to the water's edge. There the girls' skirts were tied above their knees to prevent undignified billowing, and the assisting deacon led each candidate to the spot where the minister stood in about two-and-a-half feet of water.

(788) The Negroes probably follow the usual procedure of white Baptists; however, I find that no two preachers use precisely the same words, though the substance is always the same: "In obedience to the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ I baptize thee"—and at this point the immersion takes place—"in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Amen"—and up comes the sputtering, shivering candidate. When the procession returns to the church, the ones who have just been baptized line up and receive the "right hand of fellowship" from the minister and the church members—and not until then may they consider themselves as safely within the fold.

Although the water was bitterly cold that February morning, the young people behaved very well, and only one squealed a little—which was considered very bad form. If you do not come up like a lamb it is "suspicioned" that your conversion has not been authentic, and the baptism may need to be performed again.

795
• 178
(783) In the old days, when the Negroes were closer to Africa, baptisms in the tide-water section took place punctiliously, no matter how inconvenient the hour, on the outgoing tide.¹⁴ In the interior, of course, where rivers and streams can be depended upon to carry the candidate's sins away from him, a baptism can be safely set for any appointed hour. Now, cement tanks are built in the yards of conventional churches, and another picturesque custom will soon be a thing of the past. Many a time have I gone to the South End or to Frederica, before sunrise, in the hope of learning something new. Something new was not always forthcoming, but the picture in the low morning light was worth going miles to see.

(114) ¹⁴The stress laid by Negro Baptists upon baptism being performed on the outgoing tide lends support to the theory, held by Melville Herskovits, that the strong adherence to the ritual of baptism among Negro Christians is related to "the great importance of the river-cult in Africa, particularly in view of the fact that, as has often been observed, river-cult priests were sold into slavery in great numbers." (Handbook of Social Psychology.)

*Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands***"SETTIN'-UP"**

764
• (178) The custom of "settin'-up" with the dead still prevails among the Negroes, who even go so far as to ask for such a privilege on the death of a white employer to whom they are devoted. Mrs. Shadman told me that when her grandmother, Margaret Cater, died at Kelvin Grove, her family's ex-slaves came all day "to see the face." At dusk they appeared again and sat up with "Ole Miss" through the night, singing, moaning, and praying until sun-up. When Mrs. Shadman died this year, two young colored men whom she had befriended since childhood continued the custom and sat up with the body.

764
152 In some districts a "settin'-up," or "wake," as such a ceremony is now called, is more emotional than in others, and certain families are known to be extremely excitable on such occasions. A man who works for me now and then said he did not like to go to a "settin'-up" because "they holler so much."¹⁸ A wake held at the home of the deceased is likely to be a quieter affair than one held in a church, where the mourners are apt to display a frenzy of grief. When the body is taken from the church, the "hollerin'" begins in earnest. I have always wondered if the stimulation of an audience had anything to do with the difference.

764
(222)
(224) At a private "settin'-up" a big fire of logs in front of the cabin lasts through the night, and rude benches, made of boards laid on sections of a tree trunk, are placed around it. Quantities of coffee in a pot beside the fire, and a large carton of soda crackers help revive the tired mourners and keep them awake.

763 The Negroes often have a premonition of death. On St. Simon's, Deacon Henry Armstrong, who had been ailing for some months, realized his time was short, and sent for his family and friends. When they arrived he was eating his supper of fish, grits, and coffee. Later, when he stood up, moved about, and began preaching his own funeral sermon, as was sometimes done, his hearers wondered if he was "touched in the head." He called upon one deacon to sing "Old-Time Religion" and then upon another for a prayer. When a member of the group came forward to pray, Henry told him not to proceed, that he was not worthy. A "sister" came to shake his hand and say good-bye; he told her she must go to her father and mother, and beg their pardon for the wrong she had done them. She did as

(171) ¹⁸ Such behavior is in line with established African tradition. In Astley's *Collection of Voyages and Travels* it is stated that "the cry . . . is sometimes a fortnight or month after the decease. . . . They begin with crying and at night they go to singing and dancing, and so continue till they break-up."

175 are now losing—and the resistance of the slaves to “the miasma of the rice fields” enabled them to take care of the crop during the “pestilential season” with the minimum of white supervision. In consequence, all white residents who could leave²² fled at nightfall to the “salts”—as the sea marshes were called—or to the dry and higher pine land, whichever might be nearer, and the Negroes were left very much to themselves. It requires no stretch of the imagination to assume that the beloved rhythms and dances that had been brought from Africa were kept alive in just this way. For which let me say—God be praised! I have never been able to believe that all virtue was vested in the white man or his music.

Another statement of Lyell's is so accurate that it should be given here. He tells us that “The slaves identify themselves with the master, and their sense of their own importance rises with his success in life.” Mrs. Shadman, who knew all the ex-slaves on St. Simon's, told me that Maum Rhina at Cannon's Point was heard to say: “I hol' my head jus' as high as my Missus. I'se a Wyllly nig'ah.” The Wyllly Negroes always felt they were superior to those of the Hazzards, who lived on the adjoining plantation. The feeling of animosity that has persisted for more than a century among the descendants of the slaves of the two plantations may be because of the duel over a boundary dispute, in which young Wyllly was killed by his neighbor, Dr. Hazzard.

In spite of the Negroes being passionately fond of music and dancing, the activity of the Baptist and Methodist missionaries was such before 1845 that Lyell tells us: “On the Hopeton Plantation above twenty violins have been silenced.” The ban on secular music was the same in the vicinity of Beaufort, South Carolina. The editors of *Slave Songs of the United States* reported that they never saw a musical instrument among the Port Royal freedmen, and mentioned that the last violin, owned by a “wordly man,” disappeared from Coffin's Point in 1861. They expressed regret that they could not obtain enough secular songs to make a division by themselves, and went on to say: “It is . . . already becoming difficult to obtain these songs. Even the ‘spirituals’ are going out of use on the plantations, superseded (177) by the new style of religious music, ‘closely imitated from the white people.’” The statement made by the editors that “The same songs are used for rowing as for shouting,” holds true on the coast of Georgia, and it is interesting to find that the identical tunes were favorites the length of the sea-island chain between the Peedee and the Satilla Rivers. (Map, page xxxii.)

184 The similarity of the speech, customs, and music of the Gullah Negroes through-
 184 ²² The terms of the overseer's contract required his presence on the plantation except under urgent circumstances.

10+ Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

6 FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

101 of slavery? Certainly there is something to be said in favor of the accuracy of the "Gullah or Angola" derivation.

THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE GULLAH
DIALECT

197 Gullah has been called the most African of any of our Negro dialects, yet it can be traced back in practically every detail to English dialect speech. There has long been a popular belief in this country to the effect that Southern white speech is what it is because of the Negro. This idea needs to be reversed, for both the Negro and the white man in the South speak English as they learned it from the latter's ancestors. An understanding of the historical and cultural factors pertaining to the relations of whites and Negroes in the early days of slavery in South Carolina is essential to an appreciation of the origin of the Gullah dialect. These may be sketched very briefly.

175 Speaking of the environment in which the Gullah dialect was born, Smith says:⁵

(243) This section, from Colonial days to the Civil War, was the
(248) richest and most cultured of that part of the South. Rice, the
(567) chief low-country crop of that day, was extremely lucrative under
slave-labor, as was the silky, long-staple sea-island cotton. Large
plantations of thousands of acres were the rule, on which the
wealthy planters lived in characteristic, often feudal prosperity.
175 . . . Before the war, each plantation was a little world apart.
567 The slaves lived together, segregated in their own special quarters.
The Negroes outnumbered the whites in the ratio of tens and hundreds to one, and only the house-servants and body-servants came into close contact with their owners. The large majority of field-hands habitually saw only each other, their overseers, and occa-

⁵ Gullah, pp. 9-10.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

GULIAH: THE DIALECT OF THE NEGROES

7

sionally a white servant. Grandparents, parents, children, and grand-children succeeded each other on the same plantation, growing up under intimate communal relationships but in almost complete isolation from the outside world. Thus their whole body of traditions, customs, superstitions, language, religion, and mental background remained in a state of arrested development and were handed down practically unchanged.

This picture is accurate for the period following the introduction of rice and cotton culture. There was, however, a period preceding the development of the large plantation system during which the South Carolina colonists made their living chiefly from small plantings and from naval stores and other products arising from the process of clearing the land: pitch, masts, beams, staves, and the like. It took years to build up a large plantation. Among the early land holders there were probably very few who had enjoyed a status of wealth and high education in the mother country. The typical settler was an English peasant, laborer, or middle-class man with very limited means who began with a small piece of land and gradually increased his holdings, acquiring indentured servants or slaves or both for his labor supply. There was here and there a man of wealth and distinction, but the typical colonist was a man of small means, one who spoke dialect English, as distinguished from literary English. The most numerous class in the colony before the slave trade began to flourish was composed of indentured servants, laborers, and artisans. They worked side by side with the Negroes and came into contact with them in various other ways, and it was from them that the slaves learned most of their English.

175
567
178.

175

175
177
567
191

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

GULLAH: THE DIALECT OF THE NEGROES

9

of the Sea Islands today one can find Negroes who have not seen a white man for several years. 177

The Gullah area still coincides with the tidewater or coastal plantation area. This is not due to the predominance of any particular type or tribe of Negroes, but to the isolation of the region as a whole from the up-country. In the early days travel in the rice area was chiefly by water. Indeed, it is only very recently that the chief towns of the low-country have been made easily accessible by land from the up-country. The low-country was and still is a geographical and cultural area distinct from the interior. Thus the dialect called Gullah was nourished in isolation and has survived with little change because of the continued isolation of its native area. 131 (505) (484) 197 178.

As has been pointed out by Bennett and others, the Gullah dialect upon close examination displays certain minor local variations in phonology and idiom. St. Helena Island is different from Edisto Island, and both are different from some of the other localities. Furthermore, on one island one can sometimes detect variations between one neighborhood or plantation and another. These facts merely demonstrate the variety of speech backgrounds represented by the colonial families and the assimilation of these varieties by the slaves. 197

The same isolation which explains the persistence of Gullah and its coincidence with the tidewater section is also responsible for the preservation of a seventeenth century mode of speech among the white people of that area. At the time of the settlement of Charleston, this mode of speech was standard English, in so far as there was such a thing at that time. It has come to be one of the earmarks 000

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

GULLAH: THE DIALECT OF THE NEGROES

49

THE QUESTION OF AFRICAN INFLUENCES IN THE DIALECT

Pronunciation and Syntax

The supposition exists that there is considerable African influence in the American Negro's pronunciation of English. In his *Phonophography in Folk Music*, Metfessel comments upon the characteristics of African languages and their possible effects upon the speech of the Negro in America. Speaking of a Negro whose song he had analyzed, he says, "He did not pronounce the [r] by our standard. The lips were brought together more nearly like [w]. Here is an indication of the trouble the colored man encounters with English consonants."¹⁰² Again, having pointed out that in African languages every consonant is followed by its vowel, so that combinations of consonants cannot take place, Metfessel remarks, "So today, even when there are two consonants ending an English syllable, the Negro leaves out one, or even both when they are not necessary to convey the meaning."¹⁰³

The same author points to other examples of African influence. In the phrase "Mount Zion," he shows that a singer carried over the *t* of *mount* and gave it to *zi* in *zion*. "This," he says, "is probably a carry-over from the African languages of the Negro."¹⁰⁴ Further, "The use of the vowel-ending syllable in African languages may have something to do with the presence of the enclitic which is written as *-a-*. As an example, Odell Walker sang *which-a-way* for *which way*."¹⁰⁵ Again, "The [Negro's] syllable divisions . . . do not always follow the authorized dictionary usage. Words like *nu-thin'*, . . .

¹⁰² *Phonophography in Folk Music*, p. 85.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

194
177
178.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

50

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

194
 177
 • 178

cros-ses, . . . *hea-ven*, . . . *Mo-ses*, . . . *hea-vy*, . . . and *li-vin'* or *di-vin'*, . . . have the consonant shifted to the last syllable. There is room for speculation as to whether the vowel-ending syllable of African languages is not the cause of this transfer. Each of the first syllables above ends in a spoken vowel because of the shift of the consonant."¹⁰⁶ Further, "When the Negro makes an attempt at [bite]¹⁰⁷ instead of [ah] in speaking *I*, he sometimes uses the diphthongal characteristics found in Africa. That is, the [ah] is touched very lightly and [meət] is jerkily given the greater stress. . . . A still different response to the trouble the English diphthong gives the Negro is found in his sharp division of some syllables into two vowels, somewhat the same, as *da-ade* and *cha-ain*."¹⁰⁸

Most of these types of examples which Metfessel mentions have already been taken care of in the sections on phonology and grammar.¹⁰⁹ Their English dialect origin is too patent to need any comment.

Coming more specifically to the Gullah dialect, one finds such statements as the following. "There is, too, the same confusion of gender and of number, based, I surmise, upon indifference in Africa to these linguistic dis-

¹⁰⁶ *Phonography in Folk Music*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷ That is, the sound of *i* in *bite*.—G. B. J.

¹⁰⁸ Metfessel, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Except perhaps syllable division and diphthongs. As for syllabication, anyone acquainted with white dialect speech knows that numerous words are divided like the examples cited by Metfessel. The Negro pronunciation will in general follow the white pronunciation in a given area. To cite a single example, most of the people, white and Negro, in northern Texas where I was born said *plan-tation* (a proper division), but in the South Atlantic States whites and Negroes generally say *plant-ation*. As for diphthongs, I think that an analysis of specific cases shows that no general tendency prevails in Negro speech except the tendency to copy English dialect pronunciation. Under the various vowel sounds treated above will be found specific examples of diphthong pronunciation in the Gullah.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

GULLAH: THE DIALECT OF THE NEGROES

51

tinctions."¹¹⁰ "With characteristic laziness, these Gullah
Negroes took short cuts to the ears of their auditors, using
as few words as possible. . . . Yet, notwithstanding this
economy of words, the Gullah sometimes incorporates into
his speech grotesquely difficult and unnecessary English
words; again, he takes unusual pains to transpose numbers
and genders."¹¹¹ "They have reshaped perhaps 1700
words of our language by virtue of an unwritten but a very
definite and vigorous law of their own tongue."¹¹²

194
177
178.

In view of the various facts which have already been
brought out in the discussion of phonology and grammar,
it is doubtful if any of the Gullah traits mentioned in the
foregoing quotations can be attributed to African influ-
ences. The Negro does not take "unusual pains" to do this
or that. He has merely responded to the speech patterns
with which he was confronted in the low-country by assim-
ilating them in practically every detail. His speech comes
nearer being a duplicate of eighteenth century English di-
alect to which he was exposed than the speech of some of
our immigrant groups, say the Germans and Scandinavians,
comes to being a copy of nineteenth century English.

About the only instance which might be considered as
representing a direct and consistent African influence is
found in the change of voiced and voiceless *th* to *d* and *t*
respectively. Now, there are no *th* sounds in the west
African languages,¹¹³ and the Negro, on first hearing these
sounds, would refer them to the sounds most like them in
his own language, because, like the German learning Eng-

¹¹⁰ E. C. Parsons, *Folk Lore of the Sea Islands*, Preface, p. xi.

¹¹¹ Gonzales, *The Black Border*, p. 10. ¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹³ In fact, with three or four exceptions, none in any of the African languages.
See Koelle, *Polyglotta Africana*.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

52

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

194
177
• 178
lish, he would not possess vocal habits which would permit him to reproduce such strange sounds off hand. He would, therefore, fall back on the substitutes *d* and *t*. But it is certain that in the English dialect with which the slave came in contact in the South Carolina low country this same substitution already existed to a greater or lesser degree, and it is probable that Englishmen who ordinarily pronounced *th* used the *t* and *d* forms in addressing their Negroes. It is therefore impossible to decide whether the positive English pattern or the negative African trait was the primary factor. It is certainly unnecessary to turn to Africa for an explanation; yet it might be logically argued that, even if the English substitution of *d* and *t* for *th* had not existed, the Negro would have made a similar substitution.

Speed and Pitch Inflection

194
The Gullah speech flows very rapidly, so rapidly, in fact, that the up-country Southern white man is astonished at the spectacle of Negroes who do not drawl. It is a question whether there is not some African influence here. It is certain that the English of Shakespeare's time was spoken more rapidly than typical white speech in the South today, so that the rapidity of Gullah speech might in part be accounted for on that basis, but the possibility remains that this may be due to the African mode of speaking.

One of the things which impresses a person on first hearing Gullah is the frequent and extensive change of pitch in the voice of the speaker. Whether this phenomenon is a survival of the musical accents used in the languages of West Africa or is descended from English di-

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

60

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

174 from the West Indies. The variety of African language
192 groups and the conditions of slavery were such that it was
difficult for any particular African word to survive over a
large area through its use by slaves alone. But here and
there planters would observe certain native words used
by a few individuals to designate well known objects like
terrapins, peanuts, etc., and they would take up these
words in their conversations with slaves. Then, finding
that other planters had encountered similar words, they
began to use the best known ones in everyday speech and
in writing, thus giving them a sound basis for survival.
Then, too, there is the probability that a few African
words were introduced directly into English by white sail-
ors and traders who had picked them up in the various
slave stations on the African Coast.

Naturally enough, in Englishing certain African
words, the Southern white man has added an *r* to the
spellings so that it will be seen and not heard. He writes
oooter, *goober*, *pindar*, but as a rule he pronounces them
as the Negroes do, their African originals being *kudu*,
gingooba, and *mpinda*.

THE PERSISTENCE OF GULLAH

19 Smith has attributed some of the characteristics and
177 the persistence of Gullah to the native quality of the
178 "Gullah tribesmen." He thinks that "their resolute and
persistent nature evidently assisted in impressing their
dialectal characteristics on weaker and more plastic Ne-
groes from elsewhere brought in contact with them, and
definitely fixed for two hundred years the tonality of the
Negro dialect of the Carolina and Georgia Coast."¹²²

¹²² Gullah, p. 8.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

GULLAH: THE DIALECT OF THE NEGROES 61

Williams relates the following incident as an illustration of the unusual persistence of Gullah: "More, perhaps, than a hundred years ago certain Negroes were carried from a rice plantation in Colleton County and put on a cotton plantation in Barnwell District, as it was called then, but to this day (1896) the older ones of that set of Negroes, who grew up before the war, speak as pure Gullah as their grandfathers and grandmothers spoke on Ashepoo. They seem to have been scarcely affected in their low-country Gullah speech by the white people that were numerous and all around them and the Negroes native to that neighborhood, who talked so differently to themselves."¹²³ 19
177
178 •

It is not at all necessary to predicate an ethnic basis for the survival of the low-country Negro speech. Does not the low-country white speech show the same persistence? And when a Charlestonian or Edistonian moves to the up-country, does it not take several generations to obliterate the low-country characteristics of the speech of his family? The instance cited by Williams merely illustrates the fact that speech patterns are like other human culture patterns. Even in a strange environment they tend to persist indefinitely unless the surrounding group uses pressure to alter them or the immigrant group considers it positively advantageous to substitute the new patterns for their old ones. The persistence of Gullah is merely the persistence of a set of speech patterns in a more or less isolated cultural area.

Most of the younger generation of sea-island Negroes have been to school for periods ranging from a few days [872]

¹²³ *De Ole Plantation*, Preface, p. v.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

62

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

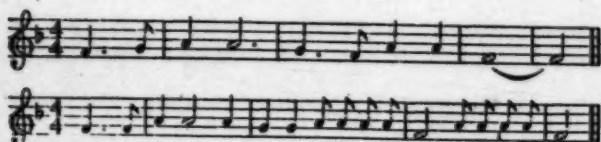
19
177
178
872
[875]
to seven or eight years. Is this process not rapidly de-
Gullahizing the Negro dialect? Probably not. It de-
pends a great deal upon the teacher, his own speech, his
training, and the possibility of giving the pupils an ade-
quate exposure to standard English. Visiting the humble
schools of the various islands, one is struck with several
facts. The teacher is nearly always a native, which is as it
should be. He, or she, more often the latter on St. Hel-
ena, has little training beyond the school in which he
teaches, he receives a mere pittance for his work and must
do other things to support himself, and as a rule he teaches
about seven grades in a one-room building.

I have heard pupils recite in most of the schools on
St. Helena Island. Most of them spell like this: *h-e-a-r-t*,
haat; *m-a-n*, *mahn*; *t-h-a-t*, *dat*; *w-i-n-e*, *vine*; *v-i-n-e*,
wine; *o-i-l*, *ile*; and the teacher soon despairs of trying to
change their habits to any noticeable degree. I once lis-
tened to a sixteen year old boy trying to read correctly the
simple sentence, "I will give them to the men." With
the possible errors *vill*, *gib*, *dem*, *de*, *mans*, *mens*, there
was not much chance of his ever reading every word cor-
rectly. His teacher had him repeat it again and again,
but as fast as she made him say one word properly he
would go wrong on another one. Finally, after some fif-
teen trials, she gave up and let him read on in his own
fashion. With only a few minutes each day devoted to
reading, and with many teachers teaching in the vernac-
ular, there is little chance that the schools will make any
serious inroads in the dialect in the present generation.
Fifty years, perhaps even a hundred years, from now, the
English of the sea-island Negroes will still be looked upon
as something unusual.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

FOLK SONGS ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

71



533

The relationship does not end here, for many readers will at once see the same *motif* in an old white mountain song, *Careless Love*, and some may be able to trace it in still other songs. Anyone familiar with spiritual tunes can trace another striking sameness of *motif* in the choruses of the following spirituals: *Roll, Jordan, Roll*; *Ride on, Jesus*; *Lord, Remember Me*; and *I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray*.

A certain St. Helena song leader, at the writer's request, sang a spiritual which the leader had composed. The tune was identical with another St. Helena tune, yet the composer was unaware of the similarity until it had been pointed out to him. Thus musical imagination works and thus new songs arise in old clothes.

7. There is a constant process of change going on among the spirituals. No song has a permanent lease on life, even in isolation. It may be passed on as a "new" song elsewhere, but in its old home it is an "old" song and must compete with newcomers. The collection made by Allen and others and published as *Slave Songs* just after the Civil War contained fifty-five songs from St. Helena. Of these, less than a dozen are commonly heard on the island today. The present writer returned to St. Helena a year after making his first collection of spirituals there and found several songs in vogue which he never heard once during his first visit. One of these was an old song

533
178.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

72

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

533 revived, but the others had come in from "foreign" parts.
• (178) Migrants and visitors coming back from Charleston or Savannah or "up North" occasionally introduce new songs.

SOME FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS ON THE NEGRO
SPIRITUAL IN GENERAL

The Problem Stated

121
533 The spirituals are too well known to Americans to need any further words of praise or appreciation. They stand on their own merits, and nothing that might be said here could add to the esteem in which they are generally held. Rather it is the purpose of the present essay to attack certain scientific questions, long neglected, centering around the relationship of Negro music to white music.

There are several points of view from which the spirituals can be studied. First, there is the point of view of appreciation. The majority of the work done on these songs has been devoted to preserving them and pointing out their poetic and musical beauties and their place in Negro life. Then there is the point of view of the artist or musician, whose motive is to develop the music of the spirituals by improved harmonic arrangements or by using that music as the basis for artistic compositions. Finally there is the scientific approach wherein the spirituals are treated as data apart from all considerations of art and appreciation. The existence of a large body of appreciative and even sentimental literature on the spirituals is something of a hindrance to those who would treat them dispassionately, for anyone who voices an opinion contrary to that which has been generally accepted is likely to be suspected of some ulterior design by certain well-meaning but hyper-sensitive folk. It should be emphasized here

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

94 FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

533
171 probably never be determined, for our knowledge of *how* the whites sang their songs is fragmentary.

533
171 The most logical way to view the leader-chorus pattern in Negro songs is to think of it as, partially at least, a product of the cultural situation during the time the Negro was taking over the white revival songs. The pattern was certainly used by whites, especially when a new song was being taught to people who were nearly all illiterate. The pattern was thus present for the Negro to copy, and, further, the same condition of illiteracy among Negroes necessitated the use of the pattern when new songs were being taught them. There is, of course, the possibility that this style of singing represents a survival of an African custom, as has been claimed by Natalie Curtis-Burlin, James Weldon Johnson, N. G. J. Ballanta, and other writers.

533
• 178

TUNES

533 *Modes.* The distribution of tunes according to the modes in which they are sung is an interesting and significant point of comparison. In his *Afro-American Folk-Songs*, Krehbiel reported the results of an analysis of 527 Negro songs.³⁷ The general modal distribution of these songs, compared with a similar analysis of 414 white religious songs,³⁸ is as follows:

	NEGRO SONGS PER CENT	WHITE SONGS PER CENT
Major	83.8	78.9
Minor	11.7	18.6
Mixed or vague	4.4	2.4

(533)
(171) One man came down the aisle singing certain words, and hundred of voices replied with certain words.

³⁷ Includes about 50 secular songs. Most of the songs are from the United States, but a few are from the West Indies. Krehbiel, p. 43. Fisher (*Servant Negro Spirituals*) made a similar analysis, with about the same results.

³⁸ From *The Christian Lyre and Millennial Harp*.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

FOLK SONGS ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

105

i. e., neither major nor minor, like the interval between the two notes of the Cuckoo's song, when the Spring is waning. Apparently, the folk-singer, not having any settled notions with regard to the pitch of the third note of the scale, varies it according to the character of the phrases in which it occurs.⁵⁴ 533
171

To summarize the present section: (1) Certain peculiarities of mode and scale supposed to be characteristic of the Negro spirituals are found in a sample of white revival tunes of a century ago to a sufficient extent to raise a question as to the validity of the claim that they are distinctive traits of the spirituals. (2) A study of English folk music in its native land and as it survives in America reveals that every supposedly distinctive scale trait of the spirituals is found in the English folk music, and that the proportions of each trait are practically the same in both musics.

Suppose for a moment, however, that the scale and modal peculiarities of the spirituals are African survivals. Where would one expect to find these traits preserved best? Naturally in isolated places like the Sea Islands where the Negroes have been off the path of social change and have had relatively little contact with white people, especially since the Civil War. What light do the St. Helena spirituals throw upon this question? 533
178.
[177]

The Allen collection (1867) contained 55 spiritual tunes from St. Helena. Of these 80 per cent were major and 14 per cent were minor. These proportions are about the same as in the white hymns of that time. The pentatonic, which should have been very frequent here if it is an African survival, is found in about 13 per cent of the major

⁵⁴ *English Folk-Song*, p. 71.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

106

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

533
 (178) tunes! The frequency of the pentatonic in the 527 spirituals⁵⁵ studied by Krehbiel was 25.1 per cent. Thus the proportion of pentatonics was nearly twice as high in the spirituals from other sections as in those from St. Helena. The recent collection made on St. Helena by Ballanta, however, contains a very high proportion of pentatonic tunes—46 per cent.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as was pointed out in a previous connection, practically every song recorded by Allen sixty-two years before had been forgotten or was sung only rarely when Ballanta made his collection. In other words, a new crop of songs had come to the front since the Civil War, and the proportion of pentatonics had increased. Did this new crop originate on St. Helena? It is extremely unlikely that it did. In a collection of spirituals made by Miss Mary A. Grissom in Kentucky, about half of the songs are the same as those now sung on St. Helena.⁵⁷ If these originated on St. Helena since the Civil War, how does it happen that they got over to Kentucky without being picked up *en route* by some of the

⁵⁵ Including the Allen collection.

(114) ⁵⁶ Too high, as the St. Helena folk would say. I am convinced that, while there has been an increase in the proportion of pentatonics on the island, it is not this great. Ballanta, a native African, must have been so accustomed to a pentatonic scale that he heard some of the spirituals as pentatonic when they were really not. In several instances I found that he had written without fourths and sevenths tunes in which I heard distinctly one of these tones. I have verified this by the phonograph records which I made on the island. In all my analyses I have used a very strict definition of the pentatonic. If either the fourth or the seventh tone occurs, even only once, in any way other than as a very light passing tone, I do not class a tune as pentatonic, but put it under another head, as "no fourth" or "no seventh" or "regular major." Krehbiel used a less strict definition, for I counted the pentatonics in half of the songs which he used and obtained 19.5 per cent where he obtained 25.1 per cent. Thus Krehbiel, if he had analyzed my white revival songsters, would have found a higher proportion of pentatonics than I did.

⁵⁷ Grissom, *The Negro Sings a New Heaven*, University of North Carolina Press, 1930.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

FOLK SONGS ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

107

collectors of spirituals? And why are they not common property of the Negroes in the intermediate sections? The simple explanation, I believe, is this: these songs originated further north than St. Helena, probably in the piedmont of North Carolina and Virginia, during the white revival period. By the usual process of folk transmission they spread out gradually from the area of origin, and, by the time they reached the outlying sections like the Sea Islands and the trans-Appalachian country, they had disappeared and had been replaced by other songs in the area of origin. It would be safe to predict that if collectors will look into the matter they will find in other communities on the fringe of the black belt and among individuals of the older generation in the piedmont a surprising number of these St. Helena spirituals.⁸⁸ Thus the percentage of pentatonic tunes on St. Helena increased after the infiltration of songs from the area which had felt strongly the folk music heritage of the Scotch-Irish. These considerations are all directly opposed to the theory that the scale peculiarities of the spirituals survive from African traits.

Modulations. Change from one key or one mode to another within a tune is practically unknown in the Negro spirituals. Modulations are frequent in conventional church music, but in the plainer music of the white revivals of a hundred years ago as recorded in the songsters, modulations were exceedingly rare. This musical heritage was derived from English folk songs, of which Sharp has said,

⁸⁸ For example, recently a Negro woman from Chapel Hill, N. C., was comparing spirituals with a woman from St. Helena. Upon hearing the St. Helena version of *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, she exclaimed, "That's the way my folks used to sing it all the time." In the up-country the other version of *Roll, Jordan, Roll* has displaced this one, which is usually considered peculiar to the Sea Islands.

533

533

174

(114)
(178)

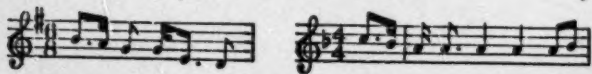
533

(184)

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

FOLK SONGS ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

115



533

But syncopation is not an outstanding characteristic of the white tunes, and it seems likely that, aside from the possibility of some influence from the "Scotch snap," this is one of the few elements in the spirituals which is unmistakably traceable to African patterns.

{ 171
177
178 }.

Some Specific Instances of Kinship Between Negro Spirituals and White Revival Tunes

121
533

Now that the background of white and Negro religious life in the United States has been described and the similarity of the various traits in the spirituals and in white revival songs has been pointed out, it is time to indicate whether or not any authentic instances of borrowing can be cited.

First it should be reiterated that only a small part of the total number of white religious folk songs is available for study because of their gradual disappearance and displacement by new tunes and by a more conventional type of song. Furthermore, to check up the relations between 500 spiritual tunes and about as many white religious tunes, to say nothing of the vast possibilities of white secular music influencing Negro religious music, is a task which might well require ten years of study. Only those instances which have become apparent in the course of a few months' work with one or two white hymn books and the best known collections of spirituals can be cited in this discussion.

121
177
533

The editors of *Slave Songs*, the first collection of spirituals, realized that it was not always easy to separate

177
533

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
 South Carolina
 St. Helena Island

128

FOLK CULTURE ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

177
 533 songs known as spirituals by the Negroes survive in the white folk tradition as white songs;¹⁰⁸ and that instances are known of a white man's having composed spirituals for Negroes;¹⁰⁹ it will be seen that the story of the origin of the spirituals has only begun to be written. But the data yielded by even a small segment of white religious folk songs seem to indicate that the anthropological question as to what happened when the Negro, with a system of music admittedly different, came into contact with white music in the master-slave relationship, deserves an answer similar to that given in regard to dialect, namely, that the general pattern and many of the particulars of the music developed in slavery were borrowed from white folk music.

To claim that the Negro took all of the spirituals from white tunes, that he has contributed nothing himself, would be stupid. There are undoubtedly spirituals of Negro composition, there are some white songs of Negro origin, and there are probably a few tunes which came from Africa. Furthermore, the instances of borrowing show that Negroes usually made rhythmic changes in the tunes they borrowed. But, if the several possible theories concerning the spirituals be listed as follows: (1) they are derived directly from Africa, (2) they are of American Negro origin,

¹⁰⁸ For example, Howard W. Odum says that *We're Goin' to End This Warfare (Down by the River)* was sung in Georgia during his youth as a white camp-meeting song. For data along this line, see White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, Chaps. I, II, and Appendix III; and Pound, "The Ancestry of a Negro Spiritual," *Modern Language Notes*, 33, pp. 442-4.

¹⁰⁹ Henry C. Work, a white abolitionist, wrote *Kingdom's Coming, Freedom Over Me, and Babylon is Fallen*. See *American Negro Folk-Songs*, pp. 31, 170. In this connection I might also point out that art songs of recent origin are even now in process of becoming "adopted" as Negro spirituals, examples being *Deep River* and *Going Home*, the latter based on a movement of Dvořák's *New World Symphony*.

10: Johnson S-4,5 (no date) 1930
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

FOLK SONGS ON ST. HELENA ISLAND

129

based on African patterns, (3) they are selections from white music, selections influenced by the Negro's African musical heritage, (4) they are largely borrowed directly from white folk music, as attested by the presence of the same traits to about the same extent in both musics; then it is seen that either of the latter two theories is more plausible than the former two.

There has been so much sentimentalizing on the spirituals that it will be difficult for some people to accept such a conclusion. The various statements of the "romantic" origins of the spirituals, of their being "America's only indigenous folk song," of their springing "ready made from the white heat of religious fervor," may be interesting as sentiments, but as scientific points of view on a question of musical relationships they are worthless. It is to be hoped that those who are convinced of the African origin of the spirituals will look closely into their English-American background before they embrace their conclusions.

And what does it all come to? On the scientific side, it appears that Wallaschek was substantially correct in his judgment after all.¹⁰⁷ The Negro's contribution seems to have been the introduction of his own rhythmic devices, the elaboration, sometimes the simplification, of the melodic patterns of white songs, and the preservation of a large body of folk song which might otherwise have been extinct by now.

On the artistic and appreciative side, it should mean nothing—that is, nothing which should change anyone's appreciation or enjoyment of the Negro spiritual. As it

¹⁰⁷ See *supra*, p. 73.

177
178
533

533

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

208

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS

175 had gone away with her and "married." She had begged
837 him to return and so he did, but after a few months he had
684 gone off again to live with the other wife down the road a
few tasks away. He was in the meeting-house yonder, a
prayin' now.³⁴

175 After Reconstruction, one heard fewer of such stories
178 on St. Helena, for the church officials attempted to dis-
592 cipline all offenders. Although there were fewer cases of
(848) desertion, illegitimacy was none the less frequent despite
the "churaching." The significant change in family life
was the elevated status of the husband. In attempting to
stabilize family life, the superintendents and teachers had
appealed to the man as the head of the family and had
urged him to assume his rightful responsibilities. Black
men who had been accustomed to the dominance of women
during slavery came now to warn their wives to keep their
places. The land which they bought from the Govern-
(423) ment was in their own names and they came to look upon
the house as theirs, not that of their wives as in slavery
days.

175 Freedom brought few changes in the religious life of
346 the people. They still clung to their plantation praise
houses, but instead of one praise house to a plantation they
occasionally had as many as two or three. Besides this
they built a few new churches, for "Brick Church" was too
near Ladies Island to be within convenient reach of all the
Islanders. But their church forms they changed very little
175 except to make the praise house leaders subject to the
794 Negro preachers of their churches whereas during ante-
793 bellum days they had been subject to the white ministers.

³⁴ See Reid, *After the War*, p. 106n.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

THE AFTERMATH

213

or at funerals, social life on St. Helena, as Miss Towne suggested in her complaint against the Frogmore people, was still by plantations. Distances on the Island were too great to enable any considerable amount of inter-plantation visiting. The old plantation names were retained, therefore, and though a man owned his little plot of the old master's land, he still regarded himself as belonging to the old plantation. He was a Tom Fripp Negro, a Frogmore Negro, or an Indian Hill Negro as the case might be, and he usually "pleasured himself" with his "own people."

To the customary holidays of slavery times, the freedmen added three others, the Fourth of July, Decoration Day, and Emancipation Day, celebrations introduced under northern influence. Dr. J. M. Hawks, who was stationed in the conquered territory during the early days of the occupation of Port Royal, wrote to his wife, "Where I live, we [*sic*] the negroes had a great celebration on the fourth, first at 6 A. M. raised a big flag to the top of the cupalo, . . . Then they had a regular barbecue—a beef was killed and roasted a la mode Southern. P. M. dancing commenced and was kept up all the rest of the day. Our Supts. and Schoolmaster and an officer joined in the dance."

The people of St. Helena modified the celebration until it came to be an occasion centering chiefly about Corner Store. There in the grove of trees opposite the store, people from all over the Island erected their stands until the string of tables reached out to a task's length. There were so many trying to sell that there was scarcely any one left to buy.

²² MS in Hawks Letters. J. M. Hawks to Esther Hawks, July 6, 1862.